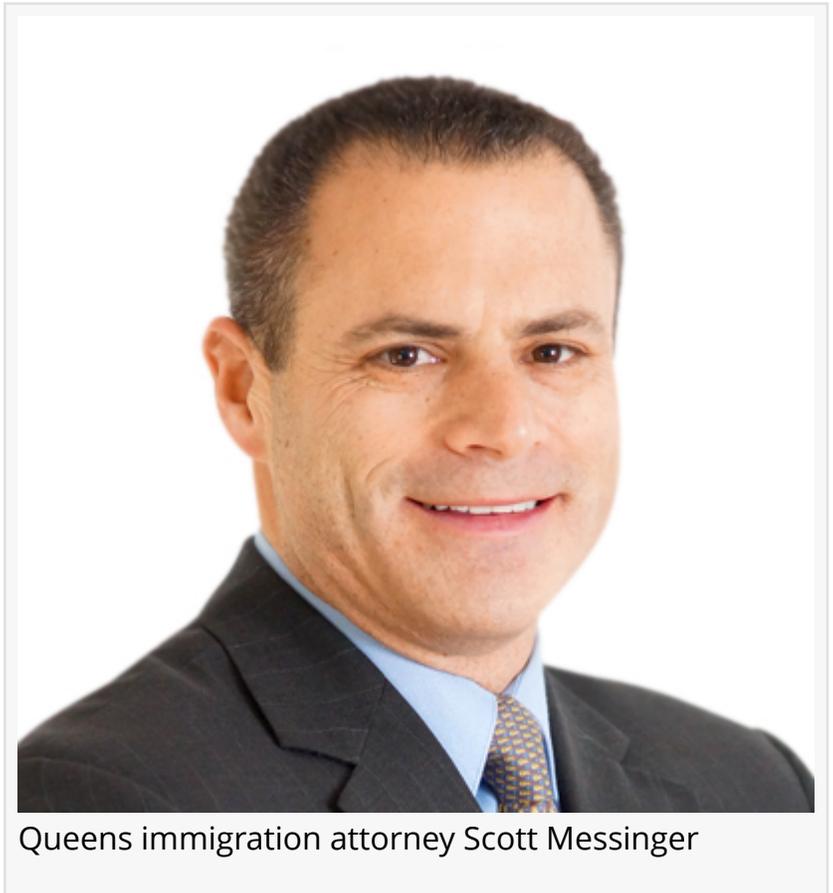


Biden Announces Raising Immigration Cap for Refugees

Refugee quota more than quadrupled from Trump era and set to double again next year, although not all spaces are likely to be filled. by Catherine Kimble

QUEENS, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, May 11, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- President Biden says that he is raising the cap of immigrants allowed into the country this fiscal year to 62,500 from the record low 15,000 set by President Trump, "which did not reflect America's values as a nation that welcomes and supports refugees." However, he adds that unfortunately, the United States will not be able to fill all 62,500 spots. This number was set in February, but his administration stepped back from this number after receiving criticism about how they handled a surge of migrants at the border. Biden still

wants to set the goal of 125,000 in the next fiscal year starting in October, but says this number "will still be hard to hit."



Queens immigration attorney Scott Messinger

"It is important to take this action today to remove any lingering doubt in the minds of refugees around the world who have suffered so much, and who are anxiously waiting for their new lives to begin," Biden said. "The United States Refugee Admissions Program embodies America's commitment to protect the most vulnerable, and to stand as a beacon of liberty and refuge to the world."

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*Scott Messinger, Queens, NY
Immigration Attorney*

A refugee is someone who has a well-founded fear of

persecution in their home country on the basis of their race, religion, national origin,

membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, according to Scott Messinger, a New York immigration attorney at the law firm [Gladstein & Messinger](#). These are the same criteria for seeking asylum, but refugees and asylees follow a different process. Messinger explains that asylum is sought by a person who is already in the United States and affirmatively applies for political asylum or claims it as a defense to deportation. People who express a fear of persecution at the border might also seek asylum. A refugee, on the other hand, seeks protection from outside the U.S., such as at a U.S. Embassy, or at the border.

After Biden announced these numbers in February, he did not speak about it publicly for two months, and he did not sign off on a new policy. This move made refugee advocates concerned. The surge of immigrants at the border received criticism from both Republicans and Democrats. Some polls also show that the public is worried about how this situation is being managed.

Refugee advocates have said that Biden's tentativeness has led to real-world consequences. For example, in the past few weeks, there were canceled flights for refugees. However, some refugee advocates praised Biden's announcement after so much indecision on the issue.

"Today we took a critical step in reversing the terrible imprint of the Trump administration on our global humanitarian leadership," said Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, the president and chief executive of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. "We breathe a sigh of relief for our refugee brothers and sisters still in harm's way, and for the thousands of families who have been forced to delay their reunification for years. We feel hopeful and blessed to be a part of reviving this lifesaving work. The revised presidential determination is not just a number. It's a symbolic message that the White House is committed to resurrecting a lifesaving program and returning America to its global humanitarian leadership position."

Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) tweeted, "We are now one step closer to welcoming Refugees, but not there yet. Complacency is not how we get anything done, let's keep pushing and demanding more. The capacity is there and we must continue to create the will." Growing up, Rep. Omar lived in a refugee camp in Kenya with her family after they fled a civil war in Somalia.

Republicans criticized the move, saying that Biden was giving in to liberal activists. "Biden capitulates 2left on raising refugee numbers," tweeted Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa).

On April 16, the White House had originally said that they were going to keep the cap where Trump had it but would loosen the restrictions Trump had on accepting refugees from African and Muslim countries. This move caused criticism from Democrats. The White House backtracked again, with press secretary Jen Psaki saying that Biden would raise the cap but that the number would be unrealistic. Biden not raising the cap sooner left many refugee advocates feeling like they were in the dark. They were still angry even after Psaki said that the administration would raise the cap. Later that day after Biden's announcement, the White House held a call with refugee advocates to try and smooth things over.

Why does the Biden administration believe that the U.S. will not fill all available spaces after raising the cap on refugees from 15,000 to 62,500? Attorney Messinger explains that refugees seeking to resettle in the U.S. face long delays. "Refugees have to undergo extensive, in-person processing and vetting," he says. The organizations involved in helping refugees have also experienced diminished capacity based on a couple of reasons, according to Messinger. "Organizations involved have been closed or working at limited capacity due to COVID-19," he says. Also, "stricter restrictions and numerical limitations under the Trump administration resulted in some agencies closing down, further slowing refugee resettlements."

Meanwhile, if the flood of migrants witnessed at the U.S. southern border recently is any indication, the American dream is alive and well and still holds promise for a safer and more prosperous existence for thousands around the world.

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