



DIANNE JACOB
SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: September 25, 2012

15

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: ASSISTANCE FOR IRAQI REFUGEES IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY
(DISTRICT: ALL)

SUMMARY:

Overview

Over the past six years, San Diego County has experienced a significant increase in the number of refugee arrivals. The influx of refugees has largely resulted from individuals and families who have been displaced in Iraq and settle primarily in East County. Since 2005, 16,424 refugees have been placed in San Diego County without adequate resources from the Federal Government to integrate them into our community. Almost 2/3 of these refugees have come from Iraq.

Currently, Iraqi refugees arrive with varying degrees of English language proficiency, literacy, education and job skills. The impact of war trauma, social isolation and change in social status makes acculturation difficult. Adding to the challenge is that the government agencies and community organizations serving this population are not provided adequate resources and funding for refugee services. These agencies have documented a need for an additional \$20.4 million dollars annually to address the unmet needs.

Today's action directs the Chief Administrative Officer to add to the County's legislative program the sponsorship of legislation that would provide funding through a federal discretionary grant to assist government agencies and community organizations in San Diego County heavily impacted by Iraqi refugees, and the sponsorship of legislation that calls on the Federal Government to adopt outcome or results based contracting practices with the organizations they fund to provide refugee services.

Recommendation(s)

SUPERVISOR JACOB

1. Direct the CAO to sponsor legislation that would provide funding from a federal discretionary grant, either existing or new, to provide assistance to government agencies and community organizations in San Diego County heavily impacted by Iraqi refugees and add this to the County's legislative program.

SUBJECT: |ASSISTANCE FOR IRAQI REFUGEES IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY |

2. Direct the CAO to sponsor legislation that would require the Federal Government to adopt outcome or results based contracting practices with the organizations they fund to provide refugee services and add this to the County's legislative program.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact as a result of this action.

Business Impact Statement

N/A

Advisory Board Statement

N/A

BACKGROUND:

Over the past six years, San Diego County has experienced a significant increase in the number of refugee arrivals. The influx of refugees has largely resulted from individuals and families who have been displaced in Iraq and settle primarily in East County. Since 2005, 16,424 refugees have been placed in San Diego County without adequate resources from the Federal Government to integrate them into our community. Almost 2/3 of these refugees have come from Iraq.

Currently Iraqi refugees come with varying degrees of English language proficiency, literacy, education and job skills. Many are skilled professionals who either need to increase their English proficiency or need to become recertified in their profession here while others have no job experience at all. The impact of war trauma, social isolation and change in social status make acculturation difficult. Clinical studies show that rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among immigrants and refugee populations range from 39 percent to 100 percent, (compared with 1 percent of the general population) while rates of depression range from 47 to 72 percent.

Adding to the challenge is that the government agencies and community organizations serving this population are not provided adequate resources and funding for refugee services. To analyze services and gaps in services, I helped coordinate a series of meetings with the Health and Human Services Agency, volunteer agencies (VOLAGS), educational and medical institutions, and other organizations serving the refugee community. As a result of these meetings it was evident that there is a huge lack of funding to adequately serve this population. Together these agencies were able to document a need for an additional \$20.4 million dollars annually to address these unmet needs and specified the impacts of the lack of funding.

Health and Human Service Agency: Limited language skills makes it hard to help this population navigate through the application process and creates difficulties in accessing services that may eventually lead them to self-sufficiency. The application process is made more complicated by the limited availability of qualified translators to assist clients.

School Districts: Non-English speakers are overwhelming the elementary, high school, and community college districts. The schools and colleges have had to place more focus on helping

SUBJECT: | ASSISTANCE FOR IRAQI REFUGEES IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY |

these newcomers at the expense of other students seeking an education. Students who show up for K-12 classes must be admitted immediately, even though funding is not provided for the additional enrollment until a year or more later. This means that additional teachers and new classes must be added mid-year, with no additional money in the budget. The refugees from Iraq and other countries show up in the school districts with unique instructional needs, and many suffer from emotional problems because of the trauma they have suffered. This requires additional bilingual teachers, counselors and nurses.

Hospitals: Sharp Grossmont Hospital is the largest provider of acute care services in East County. Its emergency department is the busiest in the county with 90,000 visits each year. Grossmont examined its inpatient and outpatient encounters to determine country of origin based upon ethnicity, language and full name and determined that 6,800 of their patients were Iraqi refugees, which cost the hospital about \$7.3 million dollars annually. Grossmont receives no funding to care for this refugee population.

Additional refugee funding to this region would pay for more translators at the schools, hospitals and the family resource centers, more bilingual and language emersion programs for pre-k thru 8th grade and additional ESL classes and mental health services. This funding will also help reduce the 3-5 year wait lists that the community colleges have for admission to ESL classes.

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) offers discretionary grants for states and/or agencies to address the impacts from large influxes of a particular group. ORR developed a Cuban/Haitian discretionary grant to address this population in Florida due to the high amount of Cuban/Haitians entrants to the state. A similar discretionary grant for San Diego County is needed to address the same issue with Iraqi refugees. East County has the 2nd highest population of Iraqi refugees in the country, with the Detroit area being first. It is evident that East County needs a similar grant to better serve the needs of this population.

Currently the Federal Government contracts with local organizations to provide refugee resettlement services. These contracts pay the organizations per refugee for a broad list of items with no requirement to show quantifiable results. Several of these requirements are simply to enroll the refugees in County funded social service programs. The County of San Diego utilizes Outcome-Based or Result-Based contracting for social services contracts, and the Federal Government should do the same. Payment provisions in these types of contracts require specific quantitative or tangible objectives and outcomes to be attained. This method ensures a better use of taxpayer dollars by holding organizations that receive government funding accountable for providing services. Adding accountability also ensures that the refugees are getting the services that they need.

Today's action directs the Chief Administrative Officer to add to the County's legislative program the sponsorship of legislation that would provide funding through a federal discretionary grant to assist government agencies and community organizations in San Diego County heavily impacted by Iraqi refugees, and the sponsorship of legislation that calls on the Federal Government to adopt outcome or results based contracting practices with the organizations they fund to provide refugee services.

SUBJECT: [ASSISTANCE FOR IRAQI REFUGEES IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY]

Respectfully submitted,

DIANNE JACOB
Supervisor, Second District

SUBJECT: | ASSISTANCE FOR IRAQI REFUGEES IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY |

AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET

REQUIRES FOUR VOTES: Yes No

WRITTEN DISCLOSURE PER COUNTY CHARTER SECTION 1000.1 REQUIRED
 Yes No

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:
N/A

BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:
N/A

BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:
N/A

MANDATORY COMPLIANCE:
N/A

ORACLE AWARD NUMBER(S) AND CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION NUMBER(S):
N/A

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: District 2, Board of Supervisors

OTHER CONCURRENCE(S): N/A

CONTACT PERSON(S):

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