

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives



November 23rd, 2015

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

Governor Inslee,

The signatory Members below, first and foremost, want the world to know that our prayers are with the people of Paris and with all those elsewhere around the world that are suffering under the ruthless, inhumane hands of terrorists.

What happened last week in Paris is but one of the many atrocities committed by the "terrorist organization ISIS," an "evil" organization, "that must be destroyed and erased from this planet," as you well put it, and is an attack on Western civilization itself. Law-abiding people must strongly resist lawless terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State and against the evil they perpetrate against innocent people or they will continue to spread their atrocities as far as they can.

Within days following the deadly ISIS terrorist attack in Paris, you announced that Washington state will continue to accept refugees, including those from Syria. In your statement on the attack, you said, "I stand firmly with President Obama who said this morning, 'We do not close our hearts to these victims of such violence and somehow start equating the issue of refugees with the issue of terrorism.'"

It is discouraging that this line of reasoning does not fit reality. It has been established with absolute certainty - by French authorities - that one of the terrorists had in fact posed as a Syrian refugee. According to The Wall Street Journal, French authorities confirmed Tuesday that DNA fingerprints from the body of a suicide bomber found outside the Stade de France in Paris are those of a man who entered Europe in early October through the Aegean island of Leros.ⁱ Just today, the French government acknowledged that "some attackers used the refugee crisis to 'slip into' France."ⁱⁱ

In a recent conference call with the White House, you were made aware of more than 30 state governors who have expressed concern and reject the idea of settling President Obama's commitment of 10,000 Syrian refugees in their states, prioritizing the safety of their citizens.

It is disappointing that you ridiculed that sensibly cautious approach as “anti-refugee comments by governors,” and equate the proposed concept of safeguarding our own citizens as “even more troublesome and of little value except to divide people and foment intolerance.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The issue we address in this letter is not a matter of “channel[ing] fear or anger against ISIS into fear and anger against Muslims,” nor is it a matter of “equating the issue of refugees with the issue of terrorism,” nor is it a matter of what religion they practice or are affiliated or identify with. As George Washington in his December 2, 1783, address to the Members of the Volunteer Association of Ireland stated, “The bosom of America is open to receive not only the opulent and respectable stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all nations and religions; whom we shall welcome to a participation of all our rights and privileges, if by decency and propriety of conduct they appear to merit the enjoyment.”

The public safety and security of our people is a critical duty of civil government. Thus, it is absolutely essential that refugees from Syria or elsewhere are fully vetted to ensure they have no links to terrorist organizations or other criminal activity. In other words, their “decency and property of conduct” must be ensured.

Some of the governors who are opposing, refusing, or suspending the resettlement of Syrian refugees into their state- either permanently or until after a security review- have reasonably indicated they don't oppose refugees coming to their states if they have already been thoroughly and properly vetted for entrance to this country through the strict screening standards and processes under existing law. But they would resist the settlement of refugees in their states if any of these standards and processes are ignored or changed to make it easier to obtain approval of refugee status. Furthermore, many concerns have been raised about the efficacy of those current standards and processes.

The Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) clearly stated at a Congressional House Committee on Homeland Security hearing that the federal government does not have the ability to conduct thorough background checks on all of the Syrian refugees whom the Obama administration says will be allowed into the U.S. The Director further noted that the federal government does not have the background information critical to effectively conduct proper security checks on Syrian nationals and that security agencies can only query against the information they have collected. Thus if a person never raised concerns in Syria in a way that would get his/her identity or his/her interest reflected in a U.S. database, we can query our databases at length but nothing will show up because we have no record of them.

Given the tragic attack in Paris, the terrorist attacks and threats we have already had to endure in this nation by sympathizers of radical Islamists, along with the FBI director's acknowledgment that we do not have the information necessary to effectively vet Syrian nationals and ensure that they will not be part of any terrorist activity in this country, Washington should not and must not participate in any program that will result in Syrian refugees, or those from other countries at war in the Mideast- any one of whom could potentially be connected to terrorism- being resettled in Washington state. All it takes is one man, woman or child, all of whom are being used by terrorists to inflict death, injury and destruction on unsuspecting victims, to slip through the system and infiltrate our communities and inflict great harm on our people.

The generous compassion, benevolence, and charity of the American people should not be used to expose the people of this state to such deadly dangers and unacceptable peril. The people of this state are always ready to help those in need, but not at the expense of their safety and security and that of their families, children, friends and neighbors. To relocate such refugees to Washington without meticulous and exhaustive criminal and security background checks compromises our security.

We respectfully request that at this time you, as Governor, refuse to receive, accept, accommodate or otherwise assist in the migration or settlement into this state, or provide, direct, or otherwise assist in making available, any benefit, goods, or services that are paid for in whole or in part with public funds for any refugee from Syria or from other countries at war in the Mideast or where foreign terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State (also known as IS, ISIL, and Daesh), Al-Qaeda (also known as Al-Qaida), Hamas, and Hezbollah, or other terrorist organizations designated as such by the United States government, who has not had a proper and comprehensive criminal security background check completed that clearly demonstrates the individual refugee has been thoroughly and carefully vetted and has not engaged, promoted, participated, or otherwise been involved in any criminal activities, terrorist acts, or other illegal activities.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this very serious matter.

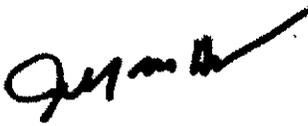
Sincerely,



Representative Jay Rodne
5th Legislative District



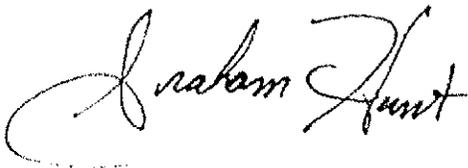
Representative Matt Shea
4th Legislative District



Representative Jeff Holy
6th Legislative District



Representative Larry Haler
8th Legislative District



Representative Graham Hunt
2nd Legislative District



Representative Brad Klippert
8th Legislative District



Representative David Taylor
15th Legislative District



Representative Drew MacEwen
35th Legislative District



Representative Dan Kristiansen
39th Legislative District



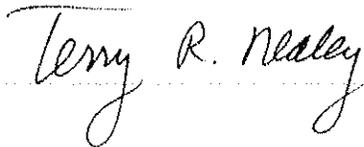
Representative Paul Harris
17th Legislative District



Representative Mark Hargrove
47th Legislative District



Representative Elizabeth Scott
39th Legislative District



Representative Terry Nealey
16th Legislative District



Representative Norm Johnson
14th Legislative District



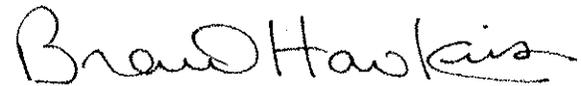
Representative Liz Pike
18th Legislative District



Representative Luanne Van Werven
42nd Legislative District



Representative Shelly Short
7th Legislative District



Representative Brad Hawkins
12th Legislative District



Representative Bruce Chandler
15th Legislative District



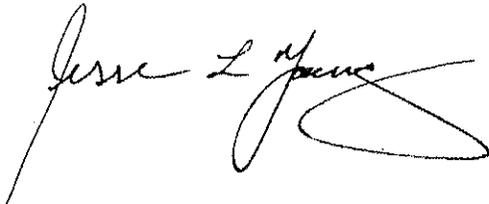
Representative Joe Schmik
9th Legislative District



Representative Cary Condotta
12th Legislative District



Representative Mark Harmsworth
44th Legislative District



Representative Jesse Young
26th Legislative District



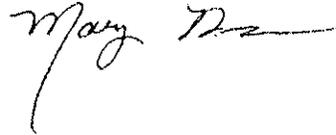
Representative Bob McCaslin
4th Legislative District



Representative Lynda Wilson
17th Legislative District



Representative Brandon Vick
18th Legislative District



Representative Mary Dye
9th Legislative district



Representative Vincent Buys
42nd District

¹ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/paris-stadium-attacker-entered-europe-via-greece-1447698583>

⁴ <https://news.yahoo.com/attackers-used-refugee-crisis-slip-france-pm-200055808.html>

⁴⁴ <http://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/statement-gov-jay-inslee-regarding-paris-terrorist-attacks-and-anti-muslim-rhetoric>