

Martinez wants 'very clear plan' before state accepts Syria refugees

Written by By Matthew Reichbach NM Political Report
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Gov. Susana Martinez isn't on board with accepting refugees fleeing the unrest in Syria at this time.

A spokesman for the governor said, "The Governor strongly opposes the Obama Administration's plan to accept more Syrian refugees until there is a very clear plan in place to properly vet and place the refugees, and the voices of governors and the public can be heard."

Lt. Gov. John Sanchez agreed on Facebook on Monday night.

"I strongly oppose the President's proposal to allow the unchecked flow of Syrian refugees into the United States," Sanchez wrote. "The potential security threat that this represents must be reconsidered in light of the need to keep U.S. citizens as safe as possible."

President Barack Obama's administration pledged to accept 10,000 Syrian refugees in the next year. Earlier this summer, the United Nations Refugee Agency reported that over 4 million people fled Syria to other countries and just days ago, Canada pledged to accept another 25,00 refugees.

The process of accepting refugees from Syria is lengthy; it takes between 18 and 24 months and the United States has accepted fewer than 2,000 since the Syrian civil war began.

A number of governors, all but one who are Republicans, have said they will not accept Syrian

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refugees, though federal law passed in 1980 doesn't give them leeway to do so.

As *Quartz* noted this law, and the Civil Rights Act, would seem to stymie the governors' efforts.

But the fact remains that any executive order designed to refuse refugees or asylees on the basis of national origin is, by definition, prejudicial—and possibly a violation of the Civil Rights Act. Governors Snyder, Bentley et al are also likely to be disappointed in their ability to enforce the lockdown, as the Refugee Act of 1980 gives the White House explicit authority over what refugees are accepted into and resettled in the United States.

What governors like Martinez can do, however, is make things more difficult.

American University law professor Stephen I. Vladeck put it this way: "Legally, states have no authority to do anything because the question of who should be allowed in this country is one that the Constitution commits to the federal government." But Vladeck noted that without the state's participation, the federal government would have a much more arduous task.

"So a state can't say it is legally objecting, but it can refuse to cooperate, which makes things much more difficult."

NM Political Report reached out to the governor's Director of Communications earlier this morning about the question of refugees from Syria. The governor sent a statement to a number of media outlets but did not include *NM Political Report*.

NM Political Report again asked a spokesman for the statement but did not receive a response on Monday night. Another source sent the statement along (the AP also ran the whole statement).

"The Governor's top priority is keeping New Mexico's families safe," a spokesman for the governor said. "In light of the attacks in Paris, she has directed all relevant state agencies to

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work closely with federal authorities to help prevent and respond to threats of any nature.”

In September, U.S. Representative Michelle Lujan Grisham signed onto a letter saying that the United States should accept 100,000 refugees from Syria.

U.S. Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, who is running for the Republican presidential nomination, said that Muslim refugees from Syria should be barred from entering the country —but that the United States should accept Christians from the country. He also said he will introduce legislation barring Muslims from Syria from entering the United States.

Because of the ongoing unrest in Syria, hundreds of thousands are seeking refuge in Europe and other countries.

The Paris attacks have led to an anti-refugee sentiment throughout Europe, as well. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Raad al-Hussein, criticized the recent European actions.

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