

MARK O. HATFIELD

September 17, 2005

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the invitation to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Refugee Act and the 30th anniversary of the beginning of Southeast Asian refugee resettlement in the United States with you tonight. I am sorry that I am unable to attend your gala celebration as an honored guest.

It is hard to believe that 30 years have passed since the first refugees fled from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Over these last 30 years more than 1.1 million people have escaped the lands of their birth, endured refugee resettlement camps in Hong Kong, Thailand and Malaysia, and eventually landed in America – a place of hope for better lives for themselves and for their children.

During my time in the Senate, I was able to work with SEARAC and other refugee advocates to draw attention to the plight of Southeast Asian refugees, create standards for judging those who were fleeing persecution, and assist those who were resettled in Oregon and throughout the country. Without organizations like SEARAC we might not have succeeded in bringing so many Southeast Asians to the United States.

As Mother Theresa once said, “The miracle is not that we do this work, but that we are happy to do it.”

I am pleased to have shared in this work with you and I honor you tonight for your commitment to the resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees over the last 30 years.

With kindest regards,



Mark O. Hatfield