



SEARAC Urges Lawmakers to vote NO on Securing America’s Future Act (H.R. 4760) and Speaker Ryan’s “Border Security and Immigration Reform Act”

The Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) advocates for the largest refugee community to ever resettle in the United States. More than one million refugees from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam came to this country as survivors of war and genocide in the aftermath of the U.S. occupation in Southeast Asia in the 1970s. To this day, our community continues to be disproportionately impacted by mass incarceration and deportation.

SEARAC urges lawmakers to stand with immigrant and refugee communities by voting NO on H.R. 4760, “Securing America’s Future Act” and Speaker Ryan’s “Border Security and Immigration Reform Act”.

These proposals will impact Southeast Asian American (SEAA) families in the following ways:

Cutting extended family immigration

Immigrants from Vietnam face the fourth largest number of visa backlogs as 250,944 people wait in line to reunite with a loved one. In 2016, 53% of Vietnamese, 16% of Cambodian, and 12% of Lao immigrants who obtained a green card did so due to extended-family visa petitions. That is equivalent to 22,000 SEAA families who have benefited from extended-family visa sponsorship in 2016 alone.¹ Cuts to our family immigration program will devastate many in our community.

Enhancing the definition of “aggravated felonies,” expanding an already broad category of deportability

At least 16,000 SEAA community members have received a final order of removal since 1998, more than 13,000 of which are based on old criminal records.² This is due to the expansion of the definition of “aggravated felonies” instituted as part of the 1996

¹ Department of Homeland Security, “Table 10: Persons Obtaining Lawful Permanent Resident Status by Broad Class of Admission and Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal year 2016”: <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2016/table10>

² Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, “U.S. Deportation Outcomes by Charge, Completed Cases in Immigration Courts”: http://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/court_backlog/deport_outcome_charge.php

Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act.³ Many of these community members came to the country as refugee children and were raised as Americans. A significant number were born in refugee camps and never set foot in their “native” country to which ICE is trying to send them.

Allowing for prolonged detention of immigrants whose countries refuse to accept their repatriation

Because of the Vietnam War legacy, the United States did not establish repatriation agreements with Cambodia until 2002—and not until 2008 with Vietnam. Furthermore, in the case of Vietnam, US policy has previously protected immigrants who entered the country prior to 1995. The United States and Laos still have no formal agreement. Since ICE cannot easily deport SEAs back, they are particularly vulnerable to prolonged detention, keeping many community members locked away from their loved ones.

Adding severe sanctions for countries that delay or prevent repatriation

In 2017, Vietnamese and Cambodian immigrants were rounded up for detention and deportation in historically high numbers as a result of the Administration issuing visa sanctions on Cambodia, and threatening the Vietnamese government to speed up deportations.⁴ This resulted in the detention of hundreds of community members. Provisions that encourage the sanctioning of countries not only undermine diplomatic relationships, but results in policies that terrorize families.

SEARAC urges you to vote NO on these harmful immigration proposals. Instead, we encourage lawmakers to support a CLEAN DREAM Act with NO provisions on increased deportation enforcement or cuts to family-based immigration.

³ “Southeast Asian Americans and Deportation Policy”: http://www.searac.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Southeast-Asian-Americans-and-Deportation-Policy_8.8.2013.pdf

⁴ “Southeast Asian American Community Responds to the ICE Round Up of Cambodian and Vietnamese Immigrants”: <http://www.searac.org/resource-hub/immigration/southeast-asian-american-community-responds-ice-roundup-cambodian-vietnamese-americans/>