



PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF LOW-INCOME OLDER ADULTS

INCOME NETWORK ALERT

SENATE PASSES BILL TO EXTEND SSI ELIGIBILITY FOR REFUGEES; ACTION IN HOUSE UNCERTAIN

The Senate last week passed S. 1721, the "SSI Extension for Elderly and Disabled Refugees Act of 2011." The bill, which was passed by unanimous consent, would, if enacted into law, restore benefits to approximately 4,000 refugees, asylees and other humanitarian immigrants whose benefits were suspended on Sept. 30 and would prevent a few thousand more from losing benefits over the course of the next year. The bill would extend for one more year the provisions of legislation signed by Pres. Bush in 2008 which provided a two year extension beyond the basic seven year SSI eligibility period for refugees. However, the measure's fate in the House is uncertain.

Originally, there was no time limit on SSI eligibility for this population. However, a seven year time limit was established in the 1990s in the belief that this would allow sufficient time for those affected to naturalize. While large numbers have been able to naturalize during this time period, there are many for whom this has proved impossible. In particular, those who are already of advanced age when they arrive in this country are likely to have great difficulty in learning English and passing the citizenship exam. Yet although they have been here too long to continue receiving SSI, they have not been here long enough to qualify for a waiver of the English language requirement. In the case of some humanitarian immigrants, their immigration status does not permit them to file a citizenship application soon enough to be able to naturalize within seven years.

Return to their country of origin is not an option for this population. These are people who have suffered persecution in their homeland. Some have had their lives threatened or have had family members killed or tortured. Some have been persecuted for their religious beliefs, others for their political views and others because they belong to a disfavored ethnic group.

Rep. Jim McDermott (D. WA) and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R.FL) introduced legislation in the House (H.R. 3083) earlier this year to extend the eligibility of this vulnerable population, but have encountered difficulty in gaining additional support.

NSCLC is interested in documenting the stories of humanitarian immigrants who are losing their benefits because of this deadlock. If you know of people affected, please contact Nancy Arévalo at narevalo@nsclc.org.

★ Please give us feedback about whether this E-Alert is helpful to you. Click [here](#) to take a short survey.



Case consultation help
for advocates

[Forward email](#)



This email was sent to oakland@nsclc.org by narevalo@nsclc.org | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

National Senior Citizens Law Center | 1444 Eye St., NW | Suite 1100 | Washington | DC | 20005