

U.S. Rep. Kind: Helps introduce legislation to protect Hmong and Lao refugees from deportation

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WASHINGTON — Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) and colleagues have introduced the *Hmong and Lao Refugee Deportation Prohibition Act of 2020* to stop the Trump administration from deporting individuals to the Lao People's Democratic Republic (P.D.R.) for 72 months while individuals with Final Orders for Removal have their immigration cases reassessed. The Trump administration is currently negotiating with the Lao P.D.R. on a repatriation agreement that would deport at least 4,700 individuals to Laos.

Congresswoman McCollum (MN-04) released the following statement:

“I’m proud to represent the largest Hmong community in the U.S. The remarkable contributions of our Hmong and Lao neighbors keep our community strong and successful. Many Hmong and Lao people arrived as refugees and resettled in Minnesota after fleeing their homeland because of their help and support of the U.S. government during the Vietnam War. It is a betrayal of the courage and sacrifice of our Hmong and Lao veterans and their families for the Trump administration to deport anyone to Laos. I completely reject efforts by the State Department to pressure the Lao government into signing a repatriation agreement. Such an agreement would result in a green light for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to arrest and deport individuals in our community with orders for removal to a country they fled decades ago. This is a dangerous policy that will tear Hmong and Lao families apart, and I will do everything I can to stop it.”

Congressman Dean Phillips (MN-03) stated:

“I’ve heard directly from constituents about the devastating impact the Trump Administration’s deportation of former Hmong and Lao refugees will have on our community. That’s why I’m joining Rep. McCollum to introduce a bill that would allow them to remain in the United States. Our Hmong and Lao community members have long made vital contributions to our economy and our culture. They are our neighbors, colleagues, and friends, and I am proud to stand with them against this administration’s harmful policies.”

Congressman Ron Kind (WI-03) said:

“Thousands of Hmong and Laotian refugees fled to the US in the 1970s, including many who fought bravely alongside the US in the Vietnam War, and I have personally met with many of these veterans throughout my district in southwest Wisconsin. With ongoing reports of serious human rights abuses in Laos—especially towards Hmong people since the end of the Vietnam War—cited in the State Department’s own reports to Congress, it would be a huge mistake for this Administration to send these individuals or their families back to a country where they will be put in harm’s way. I’m proud to work with my colleagues to introduce legislation to block the Administration from pursuing such a reckless action.”

Congresswoman Gwen Moore (WI-04) added:

“Wisconsin has a long tradition of welcoming immigrants and refugees. Milwaukee is no different and I am proud that many immigrants and refugees have called our city home. I continue to fight the Trump deportation machine that is ripping so many of our neighbors away from our community and in many cases, the only place they have known their whole lives. Now, this effort is expanded to attack the Hmong people who fled persecution and hardship in the 1970s and who helped our nation during times of conflict, face the threat of deportation and potentially life-threatening situations. For many, Wisconsin is the only home they have

known. I am supporting this legislation to protect my constituents, who could fall prey to Trump's harmful, bigoted, and xenophobic immigration policies."

Congressman Mark Pocan (WI-02) said:

"We refuse to stand for this Administration's blatant racism against the Hmong community—49,000 of which live in my home state of Wisconsin. No matter who, we oppose the targeted deportation of any ethnic community as a part of this president's larger war on immigrants. Time and time again, this administration has attempted to pass racist, unconstitutional and nonsensical policies off as immigration reform. Too many Hmong and Lao members of our community fled countries they were not safe in, and for this administration to turn its back on them now would be a failure of our values. For the Hmong people in my home state, Wisconsin is their home and it will remain their home."

Background:

- Since 1975, nearly 200,000 refugees from the Lao People's Democratic Republic have been resettled in the United States - most of whom fought or assisted U.S. forces during the Vietnam War. As a result of this support, refugees deported to the Lao P.D.R. would face discrimination. In January, Congresswoman McCollum received a letter from community groups asking her to take action and defend the Lao and Hmong communities in Minnesota from deportation.
- On Feb. 3, 2020, Congresswoman McCollum sent a [letter](#) to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo denouncing any agreement that would deport Lao and Hmong individuals to Laos. On Feb. 14, 2020, Congresswoman McCollum received a [letter](#) in response detailing how the Trump administration plans to follow through in deporting at least 4,700 individuals with a Final Order of Removal to Laos.
- The full text of the legislation can be found [here](#). Original co-sponsors of the legislation are Rep. Dean Phillips (MN-03); Rep. Ron Kind (WI-03); Rep. Jim Costa (CA-16); Rep. Gwen Moore (WI-04); Rep. Alan Lowenthal (CA-47); Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon (PA-05); Rep. Andy Levin (MI-9); Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee

(TX-18); Rep. Mark Pocan (WI-02); Rep. Zoe Lofgren (CA-19).

- ¹2018 Department of State Laos Human Rights Report is available [here](#).

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