

U.S. Sen. Johnson: Joins colleagues in advocating for Ukrainian orphans

Posted on Thursday, Mar 24, 2022

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WASHINGTON – On Wednesday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, joined U.S. Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) and 38 of their colleagues in a bicameral letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken advocating for the State Department to assist Ukrainian orphans and the American families who have already begun the process of adopting them. The letter asks the Department of State to urge the Ukrainian government to establish a consular office in Poland to process paperwork required for adoption.

“We write to thank you for the work of the United States Department of State to assist the people of Ukraine during this crisis and to make you aware of a particular group of orphans amongst the many fleeing the country. There are families already towards the very end of the process to adopt Ukrainian orphans, and they are waiting for approval from the Ukrainian government to be united with their adopted children on U.S. soil,” **said the members.**

“We believe the State Department can do more to urge or aid the Ukrainian application process to continue, especially for cases close to finalization. ... Helping these orphans to join their American families expeditiously will allow them to get to a safe, nurturing environment while freeing up resources for other refugees. In a warzone and a refugee crisis, it is often the most vulnerable who bear the greatest consequences,” **the members continued.**

The full text of the letter can be found [here](#) and below.

March 23, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken

Secretary of State

U.S. Department of State

2201 C Street Northwest Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write to thank you for the work of the United States Department of State to assist the people of Ukraine during this crisis and to make you aware of a particular group of orphans amongst the many refugees fleeing the country.

There are families already towards the very end of the process to adopt Ukrainian orphans, and they are waiting for approval from the Ukrainian government to be united with their adopted children on U.S. soil. These families have completed the United States portion of the adoption and immigration process and received approved I-600A forms. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services uses the I-600A, the Application for Advance Processing of an Orphan Petition, to determine a family's suitability and eligibility as prospective adoptive parents. International adoptions require the approval of both countries. Understandably, the Ukrainian government's process to consider adoption applications is currently paused, preventing these Ukrainian orphans from being united with their American families.

We believe the State Department can do more to urge or aid the Ukrainian application process to continue, especially for cases close to finalization. Therefore, we request that the State Department proactively urge the Ukrainian government to set up an office in Poland, where many orphans have taken refuge, to continue the adoption application process. This may even include holding virtual adoption court proceedings so that Ukraine can move through their adoption backlog quickly.

Helping these orphans to join their American families expeditiously will allow them to get to a safe, nurturing environment while freeing up resources for other refugees. In a warzone and refugee crisis, it is often the most vulnerable who bear the greatest consequences. In an otherwise complex situation, this seems to be a straightforward opportunity for the State Department to end further uncertainty for these orphans.

- What steps has the Department of State taken to communicate with American families already in the process of adopting Ukrainian orphans?
 - o What is the average time elapsed between initial outreach by families and State Department response?

- What communication has the State Department had with the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine?
 - o With what frequency does the State Department speak at a staff level and at a principal level with this Ministry?

- What other ways might the United States offer support to Ukraine so they can complete the applications of those already well into the adoption process?

o Has the State Department requested that partners including Poland and Lithuania assist or facilitate these requests, and if so, what has been the response?

Please address this situation with the Ukrainian government as swiftly as possible, and thank you for your concern.

Sincerely,