



October 30, 2023

Congressman Tom Tiffany (WI-07)  
2620 Stewart Avenue, Suite 312  
Wausau, WI 54401

Re: *Response to your letter concerning the Chippewa Valley Refugee Resettlement*

Dear Congressman Tiffany:

It has long been our Country's policy to accept and welcome those in need of protection. It has served us well. We are almost all immigrants, most of us now the beneficiaries of fateful decisions made by grandparents or earlier generations to leave a homeland for the promises of the American Dream. For those who now make the decision to immigrate, it is a long and difficult process, one intended to offer people opportunity while protecting and furthering the interests of our current citizens. Eau Claire embraces the chance to welcome new immigrants to our community and looks to the federal government to ensure those new neighbors come here through a process that is safe, supportive, and secure for all.

The Refugee Act states that it is the intent of Congress to provide refugee assistances and places the responsibility for resettlement decisions with federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of State. 8 U.S.C. § 1522(a)(2)(A). As a member of Congress, Congressman Tiffany is expected to know this policy and is uniquely positioned to ensure it is carried out properly and safely for the immigrants and our current residents of the Chippewa Valley. The responsibility to ensure that the laws of the Country protect us and reflect our values rests firmly upon Congressman Tiffany and we look to him to take proper steps to ensure that the law is followed. It is not the responsibility of the City or others. I am heartened that Congressman Derrick Van Orden along with the offices of Senator Ron Johnson and Senator Tammy Baldwin have reached out to me personally to ask questions and listen, rather than make assumptions.

Immigrants are a part of the Eau Claire story, and we have been made better by those willing to make the Chippewa Valley their new home. Immigration has occurred throughout our history. We are on Native lands that were then settled by early German and Norwegian immigrants. Among immigrants are a major part of Eau Claire and other Wisconsin communities, as are nationalities, races, and religions from across the Americas and the world. Immigrants are often fleeing areas that are unsafe and seeking refuge in our country and in our communities. Once here and safe, they return so much more than we can give them, and we happily continue to welcome those who find that Eau Claire is a place to bring their talents and raise their families. We all share personal and financial enrichment from their presence.



The process of welcoming new immigrants is ongoing. World Relief has held a number of public meetings. The Refugee Act requires U.S. agencies to consult and coordinate with state and local authorities and to financially support resettlement. This has happened and is ongoing in a transparent manner. Misinformation or misplacing responsibilities hinders this effort and fails the public trust. The City is cooperating properly with federal agencies and World Relief, but it is not a local responsibility. It is the responsibility of the U.S. government to safely and properly locate, integrate, and support immigrants in communities such as Eau Claire. As a member of Congress, Congressman Tiffany is a part of the U.S. government. We expect and rely on him to do that work. Communicating to the public in a way that demonstrates knowledge, embraces one's own responsibilities, and links those actions to our shared values, furthers trust. We will continue to do that good work of democratic government as leaders here in Eau Claire, and we invite Congressman Tiffany to begin doing so as well with us in partnership.

I encourage Congressman Tiffany and anyone else interested in this process to read the following resources:

City of Eau Claire's webpage: <https://www.eauclairewi.gov/government/our-divisions/city-manager/edi-equity-diversity-inclusion/refugee-resettlement>

The U.S. Department of State who administers this program: <https://www.state.gov/refugee-admissions/>

World Relief FAQ regarding our new neighbors who will be arriving in Eau Claire: <https://worldrelief.org/blwi-frequently-asked-questions-about-refugee-resettlement-in-the-chippewa-valley/>

Sincerely,

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Emily K. Berge  
President  
Eau Claire City Council