

To: Common Council and Chief of Police
From: John Weidl, City Manager
Date: 1/21/2025
Re: Executive Order on Refugee Admissions: Background, Analysis, and Strategic Continuity

Background

On January 20, 2025, the President issued an Executive Order suspending the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/realigning-the-united-states-refugee-admissions-program/>

This action reflects a national shift toward recalibrating migration policies to prioritize public safety, resource allocation, and community assimilation. Whitewater, Wisconsin, was specifically mentioned as a community notably impacted by migration trends.

Since 2022, Whitewater has experienced incoming migration drawn by regional employment opportunities, primarily from Central America. While this has brought cultural and economic benefits, it has also created challenges for public safety and city services.

The 2024 Fitch and Associates study identified three primary areas of impact:

- **Language Barriers:** Increased reliance on translation services has lengthened call durations and strained resources.
- **Cultural Distrust of Law Enforcement:** Migrants' past experiences with policing in their home countries often complicate interactions and investigations.
- **Housing and Resource Strain:** Overcrowding has contributed to domestic disturbances and property crimes.

Whitewater values the cultural and economic contributions of our immigrant communities, which have enriched the fabric of our city. The city remains committed to fostering trust, inclusivity, and collaboration to ensure all residents feel safe and supported

Executive Order: Key Provisions

1. **Suspension of Refugee Admissions**
 - Refugee admissions through USRAP have been paused indefinitely, with limited case-by-case exceptions.
 - The suspension is intended to align migration levels with national resource availability and public safety priorities.

2. **Local Government Involvement**

- The federal government has emphasized greater consultation with state and local governments regarding refugee placement, signaling potential increased engagement for Whitewater.

3. **Policy Reviews**

- The order mandates periodic reviews every 90 days, allowing for adjustments based on national and local feedback.

Local Implications for Whitewater

1. **Migration Trends May Slow, But Complexities Persist**

- While new refugee arrivals may decrease, existing populations will continue to present operational demands for law enforcement and city services, particularly in cases involving language barriers, undocumented status, and socio-economic challenges.

2. **Federal Consultation May Increase Responsibilities**

- As federal agencies seek local input, demands on city leadership and the police department may grow. Adequate staffing is essential to meet these responsibilities without compromising service quality.

3. **Core Public Safety Challenges Are Unrelated to Migration**

- The majority of police calls, such as mental health crises, reckless driving, and drug activity, stem from local residents. These trends underscore the ongoing need for police staffing increases outlined in the referendum.

Police Staffing Strategy: Why It Remains Critical

The 2024 Fitch and Associates study provided clear recommendations for increasing police staffing, and the referendum reflects those priorities. Maintaining this strategy is essential for:

1. **Managing Call Volume Growth:** Calls for service have risen 90% since 2010, while staffing levels have remained unchanged since 2008. Current resources are stretched thin, forcing officers to prioritize reactive over proactive policing.
2. **Restoring Proactive Policing Capacity:** Traffic enforcement, community outreach, and crime prevention activities have declined due to staffing shortages. These activities are vital for public safety and trust.
3. **Preparing for Federal Engagement:** Federal resettlement policies may involve local jurisdictions in consultations or reporting. Whitewater must have the capacity to participate effectively while managing local safety needs.
4. **Addressing Local Crime Trends:** Issues such as domestic disturbances, mental health crises, and substance abuse dominate police workloads and will persist regardless of federal migration policies.

City Manager's Action Plan

1. Engage Federal Representatives:

- The Manager's Office will contact Wisconsin's federal delegation to better understand the Executive Order's impact and advocate for resources aligned with Whitewater's needs.

2. Monitor Federal Policy Updates:

- The Manager's Office will monitor periodic reviews of the USRAP suspension and assess any developments requiring local input or action.

3. Coordinate with Police Leadership:

- Continued collaboration with the Police Department will ensure staffing strategies align with referendum goals and address operational challenges proactively.

4. Transparent Communication:

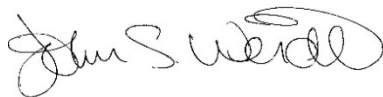
- Regular updates will be provided to the Common Council and Chief of Police to ensure alignment and transparency on emerging developments.

Conclusion

The Executive Order reaffirms the importance of Whitewater's existing strategies and does not necessitate immediate operational changes. Migration trends, local challenges, and the complexities outlined in the 2024 police study remain central to the city's long-term planning.

Maintaining the referendum and police staffing strategy will allow Whitewater to effectively manage its public safety needs while preparing for potential federal engagement. The Manager's Office will continue monitoring developments, advocating for Whitewater's interests, and ensuring alignment with city priorities and evolving policies.

Warmest Regards,



John S. Weidl, City Manager