

Resolutions considered at the General Meeting of the DPCA online, July 20, 2019

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Report of the Secretary of the Resolutions Committee

Dear International Chair, International Secretary, and the DPCA (Democratic Party Committee Abroad) Resolutions Committee,

During the DPCA Global Meeting held online using WebEx on 20 July 2019, the DPCA:

1. Amended and adopted the resolution on **USCIS closure**.
2. Amended and adopted the resolution endorsing the **Green New Deal**.
3. Amended and adopted the resolution on **Gun Violence Prevention**.

The time allotted to resolutions expired shortly after the adoption of the resolution on Gun Violence Prevention. So the following resolutions "fell to the ground," meaning that they were not adopted but also that they may be re-submitted for consideration during a future meeting:

- Resolution on Renewable Energy 2019 (originally submitted for the May 2019 meeting)
- Resolution in Support of a Global Deal for Nature (submitted for consideration in June 2019)
- Resolution to campaign against prison gerrymandering (submitted for consideration in June 2019)
- Resolution to Endorse Anti-War Policies (submitted for consideration in June 2019)

Please find the texts as adopted in this document. As I understand it, there are no actions required of the Resolutions Committee as a result of the 20 July 2019 DPCA meeting except to publish the adopted texts once they are confirmed. I submit this report for confirmation by the International Secretary and action by the International Chair.

Will Bakker

Resolution Addressing Likely American Family Separation Arising from the Closure of United States Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) Offices Outside the U.S.

Proposed by Carmelan Polce (DA Australia) and Wayne Weightman (DA Cambodia). Supported by Julia Bryan (DA Czech Republic).

Whereas in March 2019 the Trump Administration announced, without public consultation and without warning even to USCIS staff, its intention to close all 22 international USCIS offices and transfer those duties, now performed by USCIS employees worldwide, to domestic offices and U.S. embassies and consulates;

Whereas the DPCA passed a resolution on October 16, 2011 supporting the reinstatement of the acceptance and adjudication of I-130 immigrant petitions for non-U.S. immediate family members (Family) of U.S. citizens living abroad and who wanted to return home to the U.S. with their Family at U.S. Embassies and Consulates that did not have a USCIS office in that country. That resolution references the particular concerns of Democrats Abroad with regards to family separation during immigration application processing and the right to freedom of movement generally;

Whereas while the international USCIS field offices continued processing of I-130 petitions for Family of Americans living in the country where the USCIS field offices were located, Direct Consular Filing (DCF) was terminated on August 15, 2011;

Whereas, when USCIS terminated DCF of I-130 petitions in 2011, due to intense advocating by DPCA and other overseas U.S. citizen groups, USCIS did put in place a policy¹ that allowed for DCF of I-130 petitions in exceptional circumstances with approval of international USCIS field offices: the very offices that are now being ordered closed;

Whereas, since August 15, 2011, international USCIS field offices have been regularly approving requests made by Americans living abroad to DCF their Family I-130 petitions so that they would not be separated for the more than a year it can add to the process versus DCF'ing their I-130 petitions. There are also additional costs and time issues incurred by international mail and answering requests for evidence, and time zone issues involved with calling USCIS in the U.S. instead of dealing with the process in the country they currently reside;

Whereas USCIS officers are responsible for adjudicating a wide variety of petitions and applications filed internationally, providing information services, and issuing travel documents to people in a wide variety of circumstances;

Whereas the closure is expected to materially slow the processing of matters such as family visa applications, foreign adoptions and citizenship petitions from U.S. citizens living abroad and members of the military stationed abroad;

Whereas closing the USCIS offices would reassign about 70 staffers who solve a wide array of problems (such as assisting those who lose their green card, aiding widows of U.S. citizens, helping members of the military obtain legal documents), provide valuable information services

¹ USCIS Policy for DCF of I-130s, USCIS Policy Memorandum PM-602-0043.1, dated May 14, 2012, <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Laws/Memoranda/2012/May/DOS-I130May1412.pdf>

(such as providing expertise and advice to families going through the process of adopting internationally, investigating fraud in visa applications, providing technical immigration advice to other U.S. government officials), and, within its Refugee Asylum and International Operations division, process refugee applications;

Whereas the Trump Administration has been overt about its intention to limit both legal and illegal immigration and to end the policy that allows U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents to sponsor non-nuclear family members to immigrate to the U.S., known more recently in the pejorative as “chain migration” and implement a policy of “merit-based” immigration;

Whereas the closure of immigration offices abroad will discourage and thwart immigration applicants by adding considerable time to what are already lengthy wait times for application processing, eliminating processing in foreign languages and removing services that handle emergency applications;

Whereas immigration lawyers say the Trump administration has delayed application processing and heightened scrutiny of applications that used to clear quickly, preventing foreigners from being able to work, study and join their families in the U.S.²;

Whereas the Trump Administration claims this is a cost-cutting exercise although USCIS's funding comes primarily from fees paid by people who use its services;

Whereas the policy is part of a greater isolationist endeavor by the Trump administration, withdrawing engagement in international institutions and pulling back U.S. international presence generally;

Whereas the work of the USCIS officers is expected to be taken over by State Department officials in U.S. embassies and consulates, though their consent to take over these duties has not yet been obtained, thus causing enormous concern amongst Americans abroad and the immigration law practitioners who prepare and submit their filings;

Whereas there are going to be discussions between the Department of State (DOS) and USCIS to transfer some of the duties currently undertaken by the International USCIS Field Offices, there's a good argument to be made that returning DCF of I-130s for Family of U.S. citizens living

² American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) issued a new policy brief that digs into newly available data from USCIS to show the dramatic extent to which processing delays have grown in recent years. This information can be useful in speaking about case delays and answering their questions, as well as with reporters and other interested parties about the huge delays in the system and what should be done. Below please find some key messages from the policy brief as well as links to resources that may offer additional assistance:

"Processing delays" may sound like something minor but make no mistake, these delays mean families struggling to make ends meet, survivors of violence and torture facing danger and an uncertain future, and U.S. businesses falling behind and losing talent to overseas competitors.

The consequences of delays in USCIS processing immigration cases can be dire and they impact millions of people.

As revealed in an AILA policy brief, those delays have reached crisis levels under the Trump administration, inflicting hardships on individuals and employers nationwide.

AILA found that the overall average case processing time surged by 46 percent over the past two fiscal years and 91 percent since FY2014.

USCIS processed 94 percent of its form types—from green cards for family members to visas for human trafficking victims to petitions for immigrant workers—more slowly in FY2018 than in FY2014.

Case processing times increased substantially in FY 2018 even as case receipt volume appeared to markedly decrease.

There was a USCIS "net backlog" exceeding 2.3 million delayed cases at the end of FY2017. This total amounts to more than a 100 percent increase over a one-year span despite just a four percent rise in case receipts during that same period.

Yet rather than ease such destructive logjams, USCIS compounds them by imposing policies and practices—like unnecessary interview requirements and spikes in burdensome Requests for Evidence—that drive down efficiency and ratchet up delays. Such measures act as bricks in the Trump administration's growing "invisible wall"—a comprehensive set of actions slowing and decreasing legal immigration to and in the United States.

Congress meant for USCIS to function as a service-oriented benefits entity—one that efficiently and fairly processes immigration cases.

AILA's analysis makes clear that the agency is failing its congressional mandate.

abroad to DOS as it was pre-August 15, 2011, would make sense for efficiency of the process. DOS is most likely able to absorb the filings as they would collect the filing fees for adjudicating the I-130s as well as the fee they get for adjudicating the visa and they can staff up accordingly;

Whereas the practical impact of the closures absent a transfer back to DOS of the authority to accept and process DCF of I-130s, is that it will separate American families who will have to choose between staying with their Family abroad or returning home to the U.S. and being separated from them for at least a year at current processing times (USCIS I-130 processing at U.S. service centers and Visa *adjudication* at Embassies and Consulates abroad);

Be it resolved that Democrats Abroad :

- supports reverting to the DCF process that was in place prior to August 15, 2011, ie DCF of all clearly approvable Form I-130s (Petition for Alien Relative) for Family of Americans living abroad; and
- will advocate for this reversion by all reasonable means including provision of information to American citizens, contacting the agencies concerned, alerting members of the House and Senate and otherwise vigorously advocating the restoration of DCF.

Appendix to the Resolution Addressing the Closure of United States Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) Offices Outside the U.S.

INTERNATIONAL USCIS OFFICES

Latin America, Canada and the Caribbean (LACC) District

- Dominican Republic - Santo Domingo Field Office
- El Salvador - San Salvador Field Office
- Guatemala - Guatemala City Field Office
- Haiti - Port-au-Prince Field Office
- Mexico - Ciudad Juarez Field Office
- Mexico - Mexico City Field Office
- Mexico - Monterrey Field Office
- Peru - Lima Field Office

Asia/Pacific (APAC) District

- China - Beijing Field Office
- China - Guangzhou Field Office
- India - New Delhi Field Office

Asia/Pacific (APAC) District continued

- Philippines - Manila Field Office
- South Korea - Seoul Field Office
- Thailand - Bangkok Field Office

Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) District

- Germany - Frankfurt Field Office
- Ghana - Accra Field Office
- Greece - Athens Field Office
- Italy - Rome Field Office
- Jordan - Amman Field Office
- Kenya - Nairobi Field Office
- Russia - Moscow Field Office (Closed)
- South Africa - Johannesburg Field Office
- United Kingdom - London Field Office

Resolution in Support of a Green New Deal

Proposed by Susan Alksnis (DA Canada). Supported by Ken Sherman (DA Canada); David Mivasair (DA Canada); Lissette Wright (DA Canada); Martha McDevitt-Pugh (DA Netherlands); Kent Getsinger (DA Australia); Ann Hesse (DA Germany); Merrill Oates (DA Hungary); Jim Mercereau (DA Spain); Angela Fobbs (DA Germany); Bruce Murray (DA Austria); Ed Ungar (DA Canada); Gordon Gaul (DA Japan); Kendra Borgen (DA Netherlands); Kelsey McLendon (DA Germany); Susan Brennan (DA Canada); Quaide Williams (DA Germany); Darius Pruss (DA Canada); Tim Smith (DA Canada); Rachel Eugster (DA Canada); Amy Poteete (DA Canada); Layne Mostyn (DA Australia); Marnelle Dragila (DA Canada).

Whereas climate breakdown is an existential threat to the global environment, human and non-human life, security and economies; and,

Whereas disruptions caused by climate breakdown already negatively affect Americans living outside and in the United States, as well as fellow world citizens, by leading to more and deadlier extreme weather events; rising sea levels; battering the world's infrastructure; decreasing agricultural production; increasing mass migrations; threatening global and national security; disproportionately impacting poor and vulnerable communities, women and girls; and exacerbating systemic injustices (racial, regional, social, gender-based, environmental, and economic); and,

Whereas, the United States is currently experiencing related crises regarding life expectancy, access to basic needs, wage stagnation, job reductions, anti-labor policies, and the greatest income inequality since the 1920s; and,

Whereas, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has determined that in order to avoid the most severe impacts of a changing climate the world must cut greenhouse gas emissions from human sources in half by 2030 and achieve net-zero global emissions by 2050; and,

Whereas, the Trump Administration and the Republican Party have not only renounced the national commitment to the Paris Accord but are actively and openly working to increase America's reliance on fossil fuels and emissions of greenhouse gases; and,

Whereas, congressional Democrats have introduced H. Res. 109 and S. Res. 59, supported as of July 13, 2019 by 106 co-sponsors, to implement a "Green New Deal," with the aim of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions; establishing millions of high-wage jobs and ensuring economic security for all; investing in infrastructure and industry; securing clean air and water, climate and community resiliency, healthy food, access to nature, and a sustainable environment for all; and promoting justice and equality; and,

Whereas, the Green New Deal calls for a 10-year national mobilization effort, including the following goals and projects as much as is technologically feasible: building smart power grids; upgrading existing buildings and constructing new buildings to achieve maximum energy and water efficiency; removing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation and agricultural sectors; cleaning up existing hazardous waste and abandoned sites; ensuring businesspersons are free from unfair competition; and providing higher education, high-quality health care, and affordable, safe, and adequate housing to all; and,

Whereas, at least 19 states have already set or are considering 100% clean or renewable electricity targets, several referencing jobs and social justice, and the Green New Deal specifically¹; and,

Whereas, the 2016 Democrats Abroad Platform states in chapter 5 on Environment and Climate Change that we support progressive policies that simultaneously protect the environment and improve quality of life, while stimulating economic development, specifically mentioning carbon emissions, sustainable energy, and energy efficiency; transportation; environmental toxin removal; and animal agriculture subsidies; and in other chapters the Platform supports tuition-free public colleges and universities; improving transport networks, cities, water supplies, and housing stock; nationwide infrastructure development and rehabilitation; economic opportunity for all; federally funded job training and job-creation; and universal health care coverage for every American;

We therefore resolve that Democrats Abroad actively supports the Green New Deal and similar legislation, and will mobilize our members to urge their elected representatives, candidates for office, the Democratic Party as a whole, and members of the public to support the creation of a Green New Deal, similar in its goals and scope to H. Res. 109 and S. Res. 59.

¹ EQ Research, “States Chart Paths to 100% Targets,” <https://eq-research.com/blog/100/> and Environment America, “Nine States Campaign for 100 Percent Clean Energy,” <https://environmentamerica.org/news/ame/nine-states-campaign-100-percent-clean-energy>

Resolution urging action on Gun Violence Prevention

Proposed by Susan Alksnis (DA Canada). Authored by Sanchi Rohira (DA-India).

WHEREAS every day an average of 100 Americans are killed with guns, and hundreds more are shot and injured¹;

WHEREAS in the first ten months of 2018, at least 307 mass shootings had occurred in the United States (Gun Violence Archive, 2018);

WHEREAS the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported that approximately 40,000 people died in the U.S. by gunshot in 2017, the highest in 50 years²;

WHEREAS firearms are reported to be the second leading cause of death for American children³;

WHEREAS March 2018 saw one among the largest youth-led protest movements in modern U.S. history - the March For Our Lives - which called for comprehensive gun safety legislation at the local, state and federal levels;

WHEREAS Democrats Abroad invited all members to support March For Our Lives, and initiated and conducted a 'Virtual March For Our Lives'⁴;

WHEREAS March For Our Lives had over 800 sister-marches and rallies across the U.S. and around the world, including many organized and supported by DA chapters;

WHEREAS by virtue of residing in countries with tougher firearm regulations, Democrats Abroad members experience the effectiveness of such legislation in preventing the rampant loss of life that is seen in the U.S.;

WHEREAS Democrats Abroad members are concerned by the possibility of their friends and family residing in the U.S. being harmed by gun violence;

WHEREAS Democrats Abroad members therefore acknowledge the possibility of life free from gun violence and strongly wish for its implementation in the U.S.;

WHEREAS the 2016 Democrats Abroad Platform called for universal and complete background checks, greater control of assault weapons and ammunition, funding gun violence research, abolition of all "Stand Your Ground" and "Open Carry" laws, and other measures to help ensure dangerous people are prohibited from having guns;

WHEREAS the American people elected a gun-sense-majority to the U.S. House of Representatives during the 2018 midterm elections;

^{1,3} "Gun Violence In America - Everytownresearch.Org". 2019. *Everytownresearch.Org*.
<https://everytownresearch.org/gun-violence-america/>.

² Nearly 40,000 People Died From Guns In U.S. Last Year, Highest In 50 Years". 2019. *Nytimes.Com*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/18/us/gun-deaths.html>.

⁴ "Dems Abroad Marches For Our Lives". 2019. *Democrats Abroad*.
https://www.democratsabroad.org/dems_abroad_marches_for_our_lives.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Democrats Abroad will actively campaign for gun-sense legislation;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Democrats Abroad thanks the Democratic National Committee for recognizing gun violence as a public health issue and urges all policymakers to actively prioritize gun violence prevention legislation, such as:

- banning high-capacity magazines and the manufacture and sale of semi-automatic weapons while introducing programs to manage those already in private hands (for example by registering them under a federal database or offering to buy them back);
- stricter disarmament of domestic abusers and high-risk individuals, including better coordination between local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to those ends;
- fully funding the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to research gun violence;
- eliminating Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) restrictions which hinder monitoring of gun sales; and
- strengthening universal required background checks on all gun sales including online and at gun shows.