

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

**Support Continued Assistance For Refugees:
Cosponsor the SSI Extension for Disabled and Elderly Refugees Act**

May 6, 2004

Dear Colleague:

Throughout our Nation's history, people have sought refuge here from political and religious persecution. Often these refugees come with little more than the clothes on their back, and sometimes they are too disabled or elderly to seek employment. In these circumstances, we have provided a modest benefit under the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, which provides \$564 a month (representing 75% of the poverty threshold). Unfortunately, these benefits are now in jeopardy for thousands of refugees. We invite you to cosponsor bipartisan legislation (HR 4035) to ensure continued assistance for these disabled and elderly refugees.

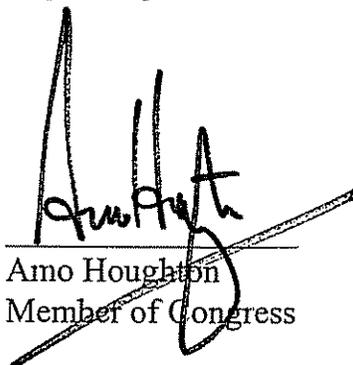
The SSI Extension for Elderly and Disabled Refugees Act (HR 4035) would extend eligibility for two years for refugees and other qualified humanitarian immigrants, including those who had their benefits cut off in the recent past. Under current law, refugees lose their SSI eligibility after they have lived in the United States for seven years, unless they become U.S. citizens. This time limit has presented severe hardships for some refugees who have lost their benefits as they wait as long as 10 years to become citizens due to delays in processing applications by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Acknowledging these difficulties, President Bush's FY 2005 Budget also proposes an extension in SSI benefits for refugees (for one year).

If you would like to cosponsor this legislation, or have any questions, please call Sonja Nesbit with Rep. Cardin at ext. 5-4021, or Hugh Hatcher with Rep. Houghton at ext. 5-3161.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
Member of Congress



Arno Houghton
Member of Congress