

# UKRAINIANS FLEEING RUSSIA'S WAR CUT OFF FROM U.S. SUPPORT

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As the war in Ukraine continues, Russian attacks on civilians escalate, and another winter approaches, Ukrainians continue to seek safety and protection in the United States on a daily basis. However, the safety net available to Ukrainians arriving in the United States has been removed.

Many Ukrainians arriving after September 30 will not be able to access federal welfare benefits or resettlement services typically offered to refugees. The recent deal to keep the federal government open did not extend this support to newly arriving Ukrainians.

## BACKGROUND: UKRAINIAN PROTECTIONS SINCE 2022

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine began, the Biden administration announced the Uniting for Ukraine (U4U) program on April 21, 2022. Under U4U, U.S.-based sponsors can apply to sponsor Ukrainian nationals to come to the United States and stay temporarily for a two-year period of parole.

On May 21, Congress passed the Additional Ukrainian Supplemental Assistance Act, 2022. Among other support for Ukraine, the AUSAA granted eligibility for Ukrainian humanitarian parolees to receive “resettlement assistance, entitlement programs and other benefits available to refugees” if they were paroled into the United States between February 24, 2022, and September 30, 2023.

Ukrainian humanitarian parolees arriving during that time can apply for “federal mainstream benefits,” including cash assistance through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), health insurance through Medicaid, and food assistance through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Eligible Ukrainian humanitarian parolees can also receive various forms of resettlement assistance through Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)-funded programs, such as Refugee Cash Assistance, Refugee Medical Assistance, and Refugee Support Services for job training, English language training, case management, and more.

## ELIGIBILITY CLOSED AFTER SHUTDOWN VOTE

In the final hours before a federal government shutdown went into effect, Congress approved a continuing resolution (CR) to fund the federal government through November 17. Many Ukraine-related provisions were excluded in the final version of the CR, including the language editing the current eligibility window of parole entry—which remains February 24, 2022, to September 30, 2023, in law.

ORR notes that “Ukrainian parolees who arrive outside of the above time-frame are not necessarily eligible for ORR refugee benefits and services”—although some newly arriving family members, such as spouses and children, may remain eligible.

While Ukrainians parolees who entered the United States before September 30 remain ORR-eligible, resettlement agencies expect the effects of the expired eligibility window to be swift—as newly arrived Ukrainians won’t be able to enroll in resettlement services at local affiliate offices.

Resettlement agency staff worry that sponsorship breakdowns will become more common, vulnerable cases will not receive appropriate support, and instances of trafficking and exploitation could proliferate in the absence of support like case management.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Congress approves new authorization language to amend the AUSAA to provide benefits and services for Ukrainian humanitarian parolees arriving between February 24, 2022 and September 30, 2024 - a year from the date in current statute.
- Authorization language in the next major piece of legislation should be retroactive to ensure that Ukrainians arriving after September 30, 2023 are covered by the new eligibility window.
- Congress should also consider additional funding to the Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account to fund critical assistance to Ukrainian humanitarian parolees.

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