

# Shaken Stability

THREATS TO STATUS, WORK AUTHORIZATION  
FOR UKRAINIANS IN THE UNITED STATES

February 2026





**Global Refuge** is an international nonprofit serving newcomers seeking safety, support, and a share in the American dream. We have been a leader in resettlement for over 85 years, dedicated to supporting refugees and other immigrants through advocacy, care, and empowerment to restore a sense of home.

*Cover image: A mother and child in an Ukrainian air raid shelter.  
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# Executive Summary

On February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The ensuing war became the largest land conflict in Europe since World War II.

Millions of Ukrainians were displaced by the war. Although the vast majority fled to neighboring countries in Europe or were internally displaced within Ukraine, more than 200,000 Ukrainians sought safety in the United States, primarily through a humanitarian parole program called Uniting for Ukraine (U4U).

Four years since the full-scale invasion began, many of these Ukrainians remain in the United States. As a population, they have not yet been subject to sweeping revocations of their status like other immigrant groups, such as Haitians or Venezuelans on temporary status.

**Yet Ukrainians are increasingly slipping into immigration limbo. They face mounting fees for applications, dwindling options for status, lapsing work permits, and heightened uncertainty.**

Without concrete action by the U.S. government through the administration or Congress, thousands of Ukrainians will lose their status in the coming months and face further insecurity.

This report from Global Refuge will discuss the state of protections and support for Ukrainians displaced by the Russian invasion and residing in the United States. It offers policy recommendations to support those affected by the ongoing war.

Some of the most pressing recommendations for the U.S. government include:

- **Swiftly processing requests for re-parole, Temporary Protected Status, and employment authorization** to keep Ukrainians in status and work-authorized
- **Creating and expanding immigration relief for Ukrainians** through temporary designations, such as a Temporary Protected Status redesignation, a Temporary Protected Status extension, and/or Deferred Enforced Departure for Ukraine
- **Advancing legislative solutions to provide temporary and permanent status options for Ukrainians**, such as the Protecting Our Guests During Hostilities in Ukraine Act (S.696/H.R. 2118) or the Ukrainian Adjustment Act (H.R. 3104)
- **Resuming asylum decisions for Ukrainians**
- **Resuming and increasing refugee admissions for Ukrainians** and Lautenberg family reunification cases



# Background

The United States has a [history of welcoming Ukrainians](#) stretching back more than a century. Many Ukrainians arrived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for economic and employment opportunities on the East Coast or in the Midwest. Robust Ukrainian communities that sprouted in New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and other cities trace their origins to this era of immigration.

[Ukrainian immigration](#) continued to the United States throughout the 20th century, although increasingly in the context of political and social persecution under Soviet rule. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, Ukrainian immigration to the United States occurred more on family-based or religious grounds. In 1990, Congress created the Lautenberg Amendment program for family reunification of religious minorities from the Soviet Union, including Ukrainian Catholics. Within a relatively short period of time, the Lautenberg Amendment [emerged as the major pathway](#) to the United States for Ukrainians.

Through Lautenberg and other initiatives, thousands of Ukrainians were resettled through the U.S. refugee admissions program (USRAP). Established in 1980, this pathway is the United States' flagship humanitarian program and serves the world's most vulnerable populations—those who are considered refugees in both common parlance and in the highly technical sense under U.S. immigration law.

Every year since 2014—the year that Russian forces occupied Crimea and launched military operations in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine—Ukrainians have been the top USRAP nationality from Europe and Central Asia. In the first Trump administration, Lautenberg Amendment cases including Ukrainian Catholics and Orthodox adherents were specifically prioritized. In fact, in the 2018 and 2019 fiscal years, Ukrainians were the third-highest USRAP nationality, behind only the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burma.



A multigenerational Ukrainian family resettled in the United States. (Julian Spath / Global Refuge)



The U.S. refugee program fell to historic lows in 2020 and 2021 through the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and low admissions goals set by President Trump at the end of his first administration. During the Biden administration, the United States began to rebuild the capacity and infrastructure for the USRAP. However, the U.S. refugee program was in recovery after previous restrictions and COVID-19. In emergent displacement crises, such as the August 2021 withdrawal and evacuation from Afghanistan, the government relied on other mechanisms like humanitarian parole to facilitate arrivals rather than permanent pathways including USRAP or the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program.

Within six months of the evacuation from Kabul, a new crisis exploded: the February 24, 2022, full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces.

More than 10 million people were displaced in the first month of the Russian invasion, more than 6.5 million inside Ukraine and 3.7 million to other countries.

[\(UNHCR\)](#)



# Temporary Status

As it did in the [Afghan evacuation](#) several months earlier, immigration parole featured heavily in the response to Ukrainians seeking entry and admission to the United States. In the immigration context, parole is official entry and admission to the United States. Parole—also called humanitarian parole—is granted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on a discretionary, case-by-case basis for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit.

Most Ukrainian arrivals since February 2022 have occurred through this temporary mechanism. The use of parole occurred in two different stages, however, and had some overlap with another temporary protection: Temporary Protected Status.

## **Parole: The early days and the start of U4U**

In the invasion's immediate aftermath, thousands of Ukrainians sought to reunite with loved ones in the United States. Many traveled to Mexico or Canada and presented themselves to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at U.S. land ports of entry.

[More than 20,000 Ukrainians](#) arrived this way in February, March, and April 2022—primarily at the San Ysidro port of entry near San Diego, California and Tijuana, Mexico. Service providers [reported](#) Ukrainians camping out in Tijuana waiting to be processed by CBP.

Although many individuals of other nationalities arriving at the United States' southern border at the time [were turned away under pandemic-era Title 42 restrictions, the overwhelming majority of presenting Ukrainians](#) were granted admission. Most of these Ukrainians [received](#) one year of parole.



A Ukrainian family arriving in the United States. (Julian Spath | Global Refuge)



In part to regularize arrival methods and to curb the trend of Ukrainians traveling to Mexico to present themselves to CBP, [the Biden administration](#) launched a parole program called Uniting for Ukraine (U4U) in April 2022. Under the program, U.S.-based sponsors could apply on behalf of Ukrainian nationals seeking admission to the United States.

Approved cases under the U4U process received travel authorization to come to the United States. These individuals could use commercial air travel to arrive at U.S. airports and were typically granted two years of parole upon arrival.

For the remainder of the Biden administration, U4U served as the main pathway for Ukrainians to arrive in the United States. By the end of 2024, roughly 240,000 Ukrainians had arrived through U4U, according to DHS data.

### ***Parole extensions and re-parole***

By its very nature, immigration parole is temporary. A grant of parole also does not automatically connect to a more long-term status.

Ukrainians arriving in the United States through parole faced a ticking clock. Their parole would end either one or two years from their arrival dates—meaning that lapses of parole have loomed for various Ukrainians since early 2023 depending on their initial arrival date and duration of parole.

Ukrainians who arrived at ports of entry in the spring of 2022 prior to U4U were typically granted one year of parole. In March 2023, DHS created a [parole extension process](#) for these individuals to be granted an extra year of parole. DHS officials framed this step as a course correction to match the two-year grants of parole offered under U4U.

In February 2024, DHS [created](#) a re-parole program for Ukrainians to request an additional two years of parole. This process allowed Ukrainians who received parole on or after February 11, 2022, to apply for an additional two years of parole by submitting a Form I-131 Application for Travel Document.

**239,927  
Ukrainians  
paroled**

**under U4U between  
the program's  
launch in April 2022  
and the end of  
December 2024.**

### ***Temporary Protected Status***

Parole is not the only form of temporary protection available to Ukrainians. In the immediate aftermath of the invasion, then-Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas designated Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ukraine.

[TPS](#) provides protection from removal and access to work authorization for foreign nationals whose countries are experiencing conflict, disasters, or other crises. This 18-month TPS designation—[announced within days of the start of the invasion](#)—created a layer of protection for Ukrainians who were in the United States when the invasion began or arrived shortly thereafter.



As this first TPS designation drew to a close, DHS [redesignated and extended](#) the TPS designation for Ukraine in August 2023. The protections of [this designation](#) began in October 2023 for an 18-month period until April 2025.

- The **extension** meant the protections of TPS were extended another 18 months for those who were already TPS beneficiaries at the time.
- The **redesignation** created a new cut-off date in 2023 for more recently arrived Ukrainians to be eligible for TPS.

In his final days in office in January 2025, Sec. Mayorkas extended several TPS designations, including TPS for Ukraine.

- This [extension](#) created a new window of time for Ukraine TPS beneficiaries to request a renewal.
- However, the lack of a **redesignation** meant that the cut-off date in 2023 remained the same—thus, Ukrainians who arrived through U4U in late 2023 or throughout 2024 could not newly qualify for TPS.

In January 2025, there were more than 103,000 Ukrainian TPS beneficiaries—many of them U4U parolees who had acquired TPS in addition to their grant of parole.

So far, this 18-month extension of TPS for Ukraine has been left in place by DHS Sec. Kristi Noem—who has otherwise sought to revoke TPS for other populations like Venezuelans and Haitians.

### **Requests to renew temporary status**

Ukrainians need to proactively apply to the DHS agency U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to request a renewal of their temporary status, like re-parole or TPS.

Legal service providers reported that Ukrainian re-parole requests were generally approved by USCIS after the re-parole program's launch, with relatively quick adjudications in 2024.

In February 2025, however, USCIS placed an ["administrative hold"](#) on processing applications filed by parolee populations, including Ukrainians. Citing vetting and fraud concerns under Biden-era parole programs, USCIS leadership left this administrative pause in place for months—meaning timely requests to renew status were left unreviewed.

USCIS formally lifted this pause in June 2025 after a ruling in the lawsuit Svitlana Doe v. Noem, [where plaintiffs challenged](#) several of the second Trump administration's policy changes on immigration parole.

One year into the second Trump administration, re-parole is still officially available to Ukrainians. Attorneys, case managers, and Ukrainian beneficiaries have reported anecdotal incidents of Ukrainian re-parole approvals and some re-parole requests have seen movement after [Congressional intervention](#). However, many re-parole requests from Ukrainians have been denied, gone unadjudicated for months, or been further delayed by follow-up requests for evidence (RFEs).



Members of Congress in both chambers have urged USCIS to quickly process pending applications to keep Ukrainians in status, including this bipartisan group of House members in July 2025 led by Rep. Kaptur of Ohio, Rep. Quigley of Illinois, and Rep. Pingree of Maine:

*"Ukrainians in our districts are increasingly seeing their statuses and work authorization lapse under expiring grants of parole offered under the [U4U] program. After years of being employed, paying taxes, and contributing to our neighborhoods, Ukrainians in our districts now live in uncertainty—a state of limbo that hurts communities and employers alike who've sought to help this population."*

## Recommendations:

- **USCIS should continue adjudicating requests for Ukrainian re-parole and TPS for Ukraine and exercising favorable discretion toward timely requests on a case-by-case basis.** Amid other USCIS policy and processing changes throughout 2025, there is likely a large backlog of pending applications for Ukrainians to renew their status.
- **USCIS should update its public-facing guidance and information for Ukrainian nationals** with more recent information on Ukrainian re-parole, as well as provide the latest processing times.
- **The Department of Homeland Security should redesignate and extend Ukraine for TPS.** The current designation is set to expire in October 2026. Country conditions in Ukraine continue to meet the statutory requirements for TPS, including armed conflict and other extraordinary conditions that affect the ability of nationals to safely return.
  - A TPS extension would continue the protections of TPS for those already enrolled.
  - A TPS redesignation would be essential to provide a new non-parole basis for status for those who have arrived since August 2023.
- **President Trump should also consider Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Ukraine.** DED provides similar protections to TPS, including protection from removal and access to work authorization. DED authority resides with the president's foreign policy decision making. Given President Trump's favorable statements on Ukrainian newcomers and his administration's foreign policy interests related to the war, President Trump should declare DED for Ukraine. Eligible nationals who meet the physical presence and residence requirements of DED immediately benefit from the status, whereas individuals have to proactively file for TPS or re-parole and receive a positive adjudicatory decision to receive the status. With heightened fees for TPS or re-parole enacted in 2025, DED would provide immediate relief and equitable access to a temporary status.
- **Members of Congress should support and seek passage of the Protecting Our Guests During Hostilities in Ukraine Act.** This bill would create a novel "Ukrainian guest status"—distinct from TPS or parole—for Ukrainians who arrived through U4U and leave that temporary status in place as long as the war in Ukraine continues. The bill (S.696/H.R. 2118) was introduced in the U.S. [Senate](#) and [House of Representatives](#) with the passing of the third anniversary of the Russian invasion in 2025.



# Work Authorization

Employment authorization or work permits for immigrant groups often depend on their immigration status under U.S. law.

Work permits for Ukrainians living in the United States come from an active parole or other status like TPS. These work permits are also temporary.

Ukrainian parolees admitted under U4U were automatically considered work-authorized by virtue of their status. However, Ukrainians' access to work authorization has been greatly affected by policy changes in the first year of the second Trump administration.

The USCIS [pause on reviewing applications filed by Ukrainians and other parolee populations](#) also applied to employment authorization document (EAD) requests. The USCIS pause meant that with each passing month, more Ukrainians faced lapses in their work permits—which were based on an active grant of parole.

While it was officially lifted [in June 2025](#), this bureaucratic freeze had profound real-life consequences for Ukrainians across the country—such as [families losing their work authorization and the means to support themselves](#).

TPS-based work permit requests have also gone unadjudicated—leaving individuals without work authorization.

The Trump administration has made a host of other policy changes related to work authorization, including [ending automatic EAD extensions](#); [shortening work permit validity periods for refugees, asylees, and others](#); hiking EAD fees for many immigrant categories; and [restricting access to non-domiciled commercial driver's licenses \(CDLs\)](#)—which [blocks newly arrived Ukrainians](#) from industries they have joined in large numbers.



*Displaced Ukrainians resettled in the United States. (Julian Spath / Global Refuge)*



## Recommendations:

- **USCIS should continue adjudicating parole-based or TPS-based EAD requests from Ukrainians and exercising favorable discretion toward timely requests on a case-by-case basis.**
- **USCIS should exercise discretion for granting maximum EAD validity based on an applicant's filing date.** Ukrainians who applied for work permits prior to updated policy changes on EAD validity should not be subject to shortened windows of work authorization.
- **The Trump administration should reconsider its plans to restrict non-domiciled commercial driver's licenses for humanitarian parolees.**
- **The Trump administration should abandon reported plans to suspend the issuance of new work permits to asylum-seekers until USCIS decides all asylum claims within an average of 180 days.** Given current government backlogs, [the proposed rule under development](#) would essentially end work authorization for asylum applicants, including Ukrainians, who file affirmative asylum claims.

## Access to Services

In the United States, access to services and benefits for immigrants is often tied to one's underlying status.

Parolees are not automatically eligible for benefits and services as other populations are. However, Congress specifically authorized certain Ukrainians to be eligible for services to the same extent as other immigrant groups like refugees. In May 2022, the Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act included language that authorized certain Ukrainian parolees to be eligible for resettlement support and federal mainstream benefits that refugees were. This authorization—initially applying to Ukrainians who arrived through parole between February 24, 2022, and September 30, 2023—was critical for Ukrainians; it [connected them to resettlement support in their local communities](#) that went beyond what U.S.-based sponsors are able to provide.

In 2023, Ukrainians who arrived beginning that fall [were ineligible for resettlement support and benefits](#), as Congress did not update federal law in time to provide eligibility for newer arrivals. In April 2024, Congress passed a Ukraine-Israel-Taiwan national security supplemental package that [addressed this lapse through language to authorize Ukrainians](#) who arrived in the fall of 2023 and most of 2024 as newly eligible.

Thus, [Ukrainians who have arrived via parole between February 24, 2022, and September 30, 2024](#) (and some immediate relatives) are eligible for resettlement support. They remain an “ORR-eligible population” (a population eligible for Office of Refugee Resettlement services) as long as [their parole is active or they have filed applications for re-parole in a timely manner](#).

However, Ukrainian parolees have also seen reduced access to services as a result of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA), the sweeping reconciliation bill signed into law in July 2025. The OBBA



restricted many lawful immigrants' eligibility for federal benefits like Medicare, Medicaid, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Now, few distinct categories remain eligible for federal mainstream benefits: U.S. citizens, certain lawful permanent residents, Cuban and Haitian entrants, and Compact of Free Association citizens from the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau.

As a result of the OBBBA, refugees, asylees, and immigrants in other categories—including Ukrainian humanitarian parolees—will no longer have access to federal mainstream assistance like SNAP, Medicare, and Medicaid. These individuals should be able to access these services if they adjust their status to lawful permanent resident (LPR) and they meet other requirements of the respective programs.

### Recommendations:

- **Congress should continue funding for Refugee Support Services (RSS) and Transitional and Medical Services (TAMS) to maintain resettlement services for eligible Ukrainians.**
- **Federal agencies should implement OBBBA in a way that maintains eligibility for services for Ukrainians who achieve LPR status—either as refugees or asylees.**

## Permanent Status

Many Ukrainians initially displaced by the war hoped their relocation would be temporary—that they could return to their homes in Ukraine once conditions allowed. Indeed, many government responses to Ukrainian displacement were geared to provide only [temporary protections to affected Ukrainians](#), such as TPS or parole in the United States and the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) in the European Union.

However, those hopes have dwindled over the intervening years of the war. Russian forces continue to occupy large parts of eastern Ukraine. Russia routinely violates international humanitarian law against Ukrainians in the areas it occupies or operates in, including the forced abduction of Ukrainian children. In 2025, civilian centers throughout the country endured some of the worst drone and missile attacks of the entire war.

With the war entering its fifth year, Ukrainians have increasingly pondered whether they need to obtain a more permanent and enduring status.

In the United States, both parole and TPS are temporary in their duration and limited in terms of the protection they offer (compared to a more permanent status). In immigration law, they also do not automatically connect to a more permanent status like lawful permanent residency or citizenship.

Some Ukrainians have decided to apply for a permanent status through other means, such as asylum. Ukrainians, like all other asylum applicants, must show that they have suffered persecution in the past



or have a well-founded fear of future persecution on a protected ground such as race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. The persecution or well-founded fear of future persecution must generally be more than a fear of generalized violence, or in this case, more than the generalized fear of the war that is ongoing in Ukraine.

Moreover, asylum decisions have been paused across all nationalities, including Ukrainians, under [a December 2, 2025, memo from USCIS](#).

Some members of Congress have pushed for the United States to offer a path to permanency for Ukrainian parolees. In 2023, lawmakers in the U.S. House of Representatives introduced [the Ukrainian Adjustment Act](#) to provide a path to a green card for Ukrainian parolees. The bill was modeled after the Afghan Adjustment Act, one of the preeminent pieces of bipartisan legislation in the immigration space during the Biden administration.

In 2025, Rep. Keating of Massachusetts reintroduced the [Ukrainian Adjustment Act](#) during the current session of Congress. While the bill was reintroduced with little fanfare, some Ukrainian constituents have sought to highlight this bill for their members of Congress. The reintroduced Ukrainian Adjustment Act has the bipartisan support of 18 co-sponsors, including Republican Reps. Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania, Rep. Edwards of North Carolina, and Rep. Baumgartner of Washington.

### Recommendations:

- **USCIS should lift the hold on pending Form I-589 affirmative asylum applications.** The agency-wide hold on asylum decisions creates limbo and uncertainty for asylum seekers across nationalities.
- **Members of Congress should build support for the Ukrainian Adjustment Act (H.R. 3104)** so it is positioned to be included in larger pieces of legislation.

## Pathways

This report has focused on the well-being of those Ukrainians who are already in the United States. But as sources of civilian harm remain relevant in Ukraine, it is worth discussing the need for continued pathways to the United States.

In late January 2025, under the second Trump administration's review of previous parole programs, arrivals were suspended under Uniting for Ukraine. Travel authorizations for approved cases were thus revoked.



However, there remains bipartisan support for continuing to welcome Ukrainians fleeing the war. In June 2025, [as part of the Homeland Security appropriations process](#), the House Appropriations Committee approved bipartisan language offered by Rep. Quigley of Illinois to encourage DHS and USCIS to reconsider re-opening U4U for Ukrainians outside the United States.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the U.S. refugee admissions program (USRAP) has also served as a regular humanitarian pathway for certain Ukrainians to be admitted to the United States. However, the program was suspended in January 2025 through [Executive Order 14163](#), titled “Realigning the United States Refugee Admissions Program.” This program-wide suspension has largely remained in place for more than a year for Ukrainians or other nationalities across the entire USRAP pipeline.

In October 2025, the Trump administration set a record-low refugee admissions target of 7,500 arrivals for the 2026 fiscal year. Under this [Presidential Determination](#), refugee admissions will be primarily dedicated to Afrikaners from South Africa and other groups facing unjust or illegal discrimination in their homelands. Outside of Afrikaners, the PD or the [accompanying report to Congress](#) included no references to or analysis of other displaced populations, including Ukrainians or religious minorities like Lautenberg Amendment cases.

## Recommendations:

- **The Department of Homeland Security should consider re-opening a version of Uniting for Ukraine for certain Ukrainian nationals to seek travel authorization, entry, and admission to the United States. A reopened or reconstituted program should have strong anti-fraud and trafficking screening components.**
- **EO 14163 suspending the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program should be lifted**, as it was left in place by the FY 2026 Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions.
- **The FY 2026 Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions should be revised** with a higher admissions total and with specific allocations for Ukrainians displaced by the war, Lautenberg Amendment cases, and other vulnerable populations affected by protracted conflicts.



# Conclusion

Few geopolitical events of this decade shook the international system like the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. Amid all the conflict's security and economic ramifications, the war created one of the world's largest displacement situations, comparable to the crises that drove Syrians, Venezuelans, and Afghans from their homes by the millions.

While Ukrainians have sought safety in Ukraine's European neighbors, thousands have also sought refuge in the United States.

In communities from [Ames, Iowa](#) to [Anchorage, Alaska](#), Ukrainians have been welcomed by volunteers, nonprofits, faith-based groups, and others. They have enrolled in school, built careers, became trusted community members, and set down roots.

Parole for Ukrainians has not been cancelled en masse, as parole was for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans under their respective parole program. But thousands of Ukrainians have seen their status and work authorization quietly slip away as their applications with the government have been denied or gone unanswered. They have faced declining access to services, shrinking options for status, and heightened vulnerability to immigration enforcement.

Global Refuge and its network helped welcome thousands of Ukrainian neighbors. We remain concerned for their welfare during this turbulent time for newcomers in the United States.

Global Refuge remains committed to serving Ukrainians and working as a thought and advocacy leader on protections and pathways for Ukrainians. From supporting [Congressional oversight](#), [endorsing legislation](#), [championing access to benefits](#), and [providing legal services for Ukrainians](#), Global Refuge remains ready to work with policy makers on both sides of the aisle, community members, and civil society coalitions to advance protections for Ukrainians affected by the war.

Here in the United States, as we solemnly note the fourth anniversary of the full-scale invasion, Ukrainians displaced by Putin's war of aggression deserve more than shrinking windows of safety and stability. They deserve opportunities to thrive, succeed, and contribute.

We urge the administration and Congress to take actions laid out in this report to ensure the United States remains a safe and stable place for Ukrainians.

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This report was authored by Daniel Salazar, refugee and protection policy advisor for Global Refuge. It was reviewed by Global Refuge programs, legal services, and communications staff. It was designed by Sarah Self.

For more information on Global Refuge's work serving Ukrainians displaced by the war, explore our video playlist [here](#).