**Will the GOP send migrant buses to Seattle next? I vote yes**

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The gag at Martha’s Vineyard having run its course, Republicans now are hinting they may send busloads or planeloads of migrants to the next available conservative punchline city.

That would be us, Seattle.

The Republican Governors Association is out with a fundraising pitch centered around [a red-meat survey question for its base](https://winred.rga.org/pg_fbacq_bidenbuses_2wy_20220921_poll): “Where should GOP governors send Biden’s Buses of Illegal Immigrants?”

This is referring to how Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida and some other red-state cowboys have been dumping off groups of [duped refugees or asylum-seekers into blue-state cities](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/02/us/migrants-marthas-vineyard-desantis-texas.html). Which, if they’re now raising money off of it, must really get the MAGA blood pumping.

Who should be next, the survey asks. It invites voting from a list of four cities that they’d love to troll with a stunt: San Francisco, Seattle, Minneapolis or Philadelphia.

“Share Your Thoughts,” the pitch encourages.

OK, since you asked. I vote “Seattle.”

Yes, that’s right, do Seattle next, please. Better yet, do the whole state of Washington. Send us some refugees. We want you to.

Though I don’t speak for Seattle and certainly not for the whole state of Washington, I am 100% confident that we want them. So if your pitch is serious, by all means, send them our way.

How can I say this?

Well for starters, for the past decade Washington state has been one of the top states in the nation for taking in refugees. In 2020, we ranked second in refugee program resettlements behind only California. Through this year so far, we rank sixth.

Already in 2022, we have taken in [nearly 3,000 Afghan war evacuees](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/afghan-evacuees-resettled-us-texas-california-virginia/" \t "_blank) (fourth in the nation), as well as [763 Afghani “special visa” migrants](https://www.wrapsnet.org/documents/Amerasian%20and%20SIV%20Arrivals%20by%20Nationality%20and%20State%20as%20of%2031%20Aug%202022.pdf" \t "_blank) (also fourth), many of whom [helped our military and then fled the Taliban](https://www.boundless.com/immigration-resources/what-is-a-special-immigrant-visa/" \t "_blank). This is something people around here tend to be proud of, not something to hide from.

Florida? For all its brash and patriotic talk, it’s accepted fewer war evacuees than Washington, a state one-fourth the size. It’s also taken just [46 Afghani special visa immigrants](https://www.wrapsnet.org/documents/Amerasian%20and%20SIV%20Arrivals%20by%20Nationality%20and%20State%20as%20of%2031%20Aug%202022.pdf" \t "_blank) this year, 16 times fewer. Maybe this is a moment to reflect inward, rather than project hostility outward?

A second reason I can say Washington is willing and able to take more refugees is our excellent resettlement aid groups keep saying they can and need to do more.

“Just since September 1st, 152 refugees have made the journey to Western Washington and been resettled by World Relief,” the aid group, based in Kent, advertised the other day.

This past year, Washington’s Legislature [passed $36 million in grants and funds](https://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/5693-S.PL.pdf" \l "page=1" \t "_blank) to help resettle refugees here. Much of this aid was bipartisan. Florida, meanwhile, passed a $12 million fund to ship migrants *away*. That fund was getting so little use — [because Florida is accepting so few migrants in the first place](https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/2022/08/26/ron-desantis-plan-relocate-undocumented-immigrants-florida-worries-advocates/7895029001/" \t "_blank) — that they had to go to Texas to find migrants, then dupe them, in order to pull off the Martha’s Vineyard stunt.

The border states have a case that we need stronger border security, and also a revamp of our immigration and asylum laws. But surprise dumps of immigrants who have already weathered abuse, or worse, war, doesn’t make this case. The recipient cities are not the ones who end up looking bad. Just show a modicum of good faith — I know, it’s asking a lot — and call us beforehand. The answer will be “yes” — a win-win.

Again, how can I be sure?

Well we have a bit of a history here. Back when the world was facing a similar war refugee crisis, and, like today, other governors were turning migrants away, we had a governor who told one of them this:

“Would you please tell that [bleep] what it says on the bottom of the Statue of Liberty?”

That was in 1975. An aide, Ralph Munro, had been sent by Washington Gov. Dan Evans to Vietnamese refugee camps in California, where the governor there was trying to get rid of them. A military officer asked Munro: “Do you want these people?” [Munro answered](https://kuow.org/stories/seeing-vietnamese-refugee-camps-california-hit-me-gut/" \t "_blank): “Yes, we do.” The officer replied: “OK. You’re the first in line that said that.”

Washington became the first state to resettle what were then called “the boat people.”

“That was the message he [Evans] was delivering,” [Munro later recounted about the incident.](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/lastdays/firstdaysstoryproject/interviews/americas-job/raw/" \t "_blank) “That this is America’s job. When people are in trouble like this, that part of our job is to do our share. And so we, as a state, were going to do our share. And that’s what we did.”

Dan Evans was not only a Republican, he was a member, ironically, of this same Republican Governors Association that now wants to send migrants away. At times he served as its national campaign chairperson. Republicans are the thing that’s really changed in this story.

So go ahead, Republican Governors Association. Send us your buses. Previous migrants started Little Saigon in Seattle; maybe these will start Little Caracas or Little Kabul. Both the question and the answer repeat through history: Do you want these people? Yes, we do.