

Skagit Valley Herald

Refugees are the victims

Scott Railton

November 28, 2015

I recently read in your pages that “charity shouldn’t come at the expense of national security,” in reference to the Syrian refugee crisis. As a longtime immigration attorney, I know this is not a valid concern.

The vetting process for refugees is far more intensive than any other immigration process I can think of. A Department of State spokesman recently stated that refugees go through “the most stringent security check process for anyone entering the United States.”

Syrian refugees, first processed by the United Nations, will go through a process that involves many background checks, with several UN and U.S. agencies, before actually immigrating. The process takes two to three years, and it takes place abroad.

The Cato Institute, a conservative think tank, posted a memo this week titled “Syrian Refugees Don’t Pose a Serious Security Risk.” The memo accurately concludes that if an ISIS terrorist seeks to attack the U.S., they will not choose to enter through the “heavily guarded refugee gate.”

They will come via the visa waiver program, with a temporary visa or perhaps by illegal entry. Of greater concern, I think, are ISIS’s efforts to recruit Americans to their cause.

Make no mistake — refugees are victims of ISIS, people who desperately need help and are displaced due to violence and strife in their homeland.

I read somewhere the average Syrian refugee travels 1,400 miles to escape turmoil, oftentimes on foot. Coalitions of faith-based groups have come out in favor of supporting Syrian refugees. Our government needs to do the same.

There is a part for the U.S. to play in this humanitarian crisis, along with our allies; a part very consistent with our Thanksgiving traditions and our proudest national ideals — and fear should not stand in the way of doing the right thing.