



**CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
COST ESTIMATE**

October 29, 1999

S. 1713

S Visa and Refugee Assistance Authorization Act

As reported by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on October 21, 1999

SUMMARY

S. 1713 would reauthorize the issuance of the nonimmigrant visas known as "S" visas for certain individuals who assist in criminal investigations. The legislation also would authorize appropriations to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for refugee assistance for fiscal years 2000 through 2002.

Based on previous appropriation levels and historic spending rates for refugee assistance, CBO estimates that implementing the bill would cost \$1.1 billion over the 2000-2004 period, subject to appropriation of the necessary amounts. Enacting the bill could also increase direct spending, so pay-as-you-go procedures would apply. However, CBO estimates that the amounts involved would be less than \$500,000 a year.

S. 1713 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA), but it could result in a very small increase in the state share of benefits paid under Medicaid.

ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The estimated budgetary impact of S. 1713 is shown in the following table. Most of the costs of this legislation fall within budget function 600 (income security).

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars				
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION					
With Adjustments for Inflation					
Spending for Refugee Assistance					
Under Current Law					
Budget Authority	a	0	0	0	0
Estimated Outlays	269	141	75	27	0
Proposed Changes					
Estimated Authorization Level	443	453	462	0	0
Estimated Outlays	133	269	341	251	137
Spending for Refugee Assistance					
Under S. 1713					
Estimated Authorization Level	443	453	462	0	0
Estimated Outlays	402	410	416	278	137
Without Adjustments for Inflation					
Spending for Refugee Assistance					
Under Current Law					
Budget Authority	a	0	0	0	0
Estimated Outlays	269	141	75	27	0
Proposed Changes					
Estimated Authorization Level	435	435	435	0	0
Estimated Outlays	131	261	326	239	131
Spending for Refugee Assistance					
Under S. 1713					
Estimated Authorization Level	435	435	435	0	0
Estimated Outlays	400	402	401	266	131

a. Full-year appropriation has not yet been provided for 2000.

BASIS OF ESTIMATE

Spending Subject to Appropriation

The Office of Refugee Resettlement within HHS administers the refugee assistance program. This program provides cash and medical assistance, as well as social services, to refugees and individuals granted asylum in the United States. The bill would authorize appropriations

for the program for fiscal years 2000 through 2002. For purposes of this estimate, CBO assumes that funds would be appropriated at the fiscal 1999 level, excluding emergency funding provided in Public Law 106-31. The table shows two alternative funding paths: one that includes annual adjustments for anticipated inflation, and one without such inflation adjustments. Assuming inflation adjustments, we estimate that implementing S. 1713 would cost \$133 million in fiscal year 2000 and slightly more than \$1.1 billion over the 2000-2004 period. (Without inflation adjustments, the five-year total would be slightly below \$1.1 billion.) This estimate assumes that spending would follow the historical pattern of spending for the refugee assistance program.

Direct Spending

From September 1994 until September 1999, the Department of Justice was authorized to provide nonimmigrant visas to certain individuals who assisted law enforcement agencies in prosecuting members of criminal or terrorist organizations. S. 1713 would renew this authority through September 13, 2001. Costs to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for administering these visas would be funded from fees collected by the agency. However, any additional spending by the INS would be negligible because the number of visas issued under S. 1713 would be limited to 250 for each fiscal year.

Although individuals with nonimmigrant visas are ineligible for most federal entitlement programs, these individuals could receive emergency Medicaid services. Enactment of the bill could cause a small increase in direct spending for these services.

PAY-AS-YOU-GO CONSIDERATIONS

The Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act sets up pay-as-you-go procedures for legislation affecting direct spending or receipts. Enacting S. 1713 could affect direct spending, but CBO estimates that any such effects would be less than \$500,000 a year.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE-SECTOR IMPACT

S. 1713 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA, but it could result in a very small increase in the state share of benefits paid under Medicaid.

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