

# Bundestag votes in favor of refugee family reunification limit



German Chancellor Angela Merkel casts her vote in the family reunification motion | Tobias Schwarz/AFP via Getty Images

Vote marks progress on particularly contentious issue in ongoing German coalition talks.

BERLIN — The German Bundestag voted Thursday in favor of a family reunification deal for war refugees that entails accepting 1,000 family members of refugees into the country each month.

The bill passed with 376 votes in favor and 248 against after a heated debate among all parties. It extends a moratorium on family reunification — a policy that went into effect in June 2016 — until July 31, after which point Germany will take in 1,000 family members per month. It also allows for an unspecified number of “hardship” cases to enter the country.

Chancellor Angela Merkel’s Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats (SPD) — who are currently in formal talks to form a new “grand coalition” — spoke broadly in support of the bill. Members of the Green party and the left-wing Die Linke, meanwhile, criticized the deal on humanitarian grounds, saying there should be no limit on family reunification.

“We’re talking about families,” said the Green party’s parliamentary group leader Katrin Göring-Eckardt. “We’re talking about mothers and their children.”

The Free Democrats, meanwhile, took aim at the deal’s practicality, saying the volatile situation in war-torn countries like Syria meant that setting a fixed number was illogical. “The situation in Syria varies,” said Free Democrat Stefan Ruppert. “The deal makes no sense.”

The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) warned of the possibility of a new mass influx of refugees and differing understandings of who is considered a family member. “Would we accept the second wife as well?” the AfD’s Jürgen Braun asked the Bundestag in a debate before Thursday’s vote, adding that “polygamy

has no place in Germany.”

CDU politician Stephan Harbarth defended the deal by emphasizing Germany’s generosity during the refugee crisis — when the country accepted more refugees “than the rest of Europe combined” — but warned that “our capacity is finite” and that “uncontrolled immigration damages integration.”

Germany’s policy on refugees emerged as a flashpoint in coalition talks between Merkel’s conservatives and the Social Democrats. The formal talks will conclude this week and the SPD membership will then vote on whether to enter into a coalition.

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