



August 23, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
US Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3203

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
US House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0512

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
US Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1702

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
US House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0523

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As leading organizations comprised largely of Post-9/11 veterans, we urge you to take immediate steps to ensure the safe and swift removal of our citizens, allies, and refugees from Afghanistan. Many Members of Congress have called on President Biden to take the actions necessary to safely evacuate all Afghan allies and refugees before the August 31 withdrawal date, but Congress must also act swiftly to help accomplish that mission.

For nearly two decades the United States has fought to eradicate terrorism in Afghanistan and prevent its return, and through it all, our service members, including many represented by our organizations, were aided by brave Afghan nationals. These allies were promised protection in return for their service. Sadly, as recent events have made clear, more must be done to fulfill that promise.

We thank Congress for recently increasing the total number of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs). This was an important step toward ensuring the program has increased capacity to accept all those who may be eligible. While much of the immediate response is dependent on President Biden, there are several things Congress can do now to aid in the swift removal of allies and refugees from Afghanistan.

First, we urge Congress to quickly pass legislation that temporarily eliminates any cap on the total number of SIVs to ensure the program can meet demand and to work with President Biden on ways to reduce red tape for Afghan refugees seeking safety. We cannot leave behind allies and refugees due to inefficient government bureaucracy.

Second, additional funding will likely be needed to support current efforts and those yet to come. Congress must allocate sufficient funding to finance refugee resettlement as well as staffing increases government agencies require to meet the demand of paperwork processing and background investigations.

Our Afghan allies and refugees are depending on effective coordination across government, and this must be a whole-of-government response. We urge you to work with President Biden to address any funding or immigration process issues causing delays or increasing bureaucracy. Time is of the essence. We implore you to act swiftly at this pivotal juncture, as it may be our last opportunity to ensure our Afghan allies are afforded the protection America promised them. Thank you for your commitment to our service members, veterans, and allies that served on behalf of the United States in Afghanistan.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Butler
Chief Executive Officer
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

Jared Lyon, MPA
National President & CEO
Student Veterans of America