

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 30, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

We write to urge the Department of State to continue prioritizing the processing of Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) for Iraqi and Afghan nationals formerly employed by or on behalf of the United States government. These individuals were vital to the U.S. missions in Iraq and Afghanistan and it is our responsibility to bring them to safety within our borders.

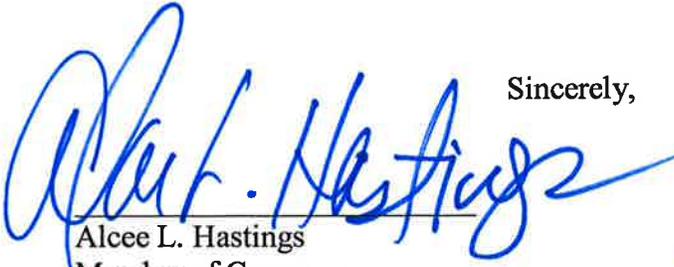
As you know, two temporary SIV programs exist for these individuals and their dependents. Approximately 14,657 visas had been issued to Iraqi nationals and 11,826 to Afghan nationals between the dates of their inceptions through the end of FY2014. As of October 6, 2015, an estimated 2,150 visas were still available to Afghan principal applicants and 1,850 available for Iraqi principal applicants.

Those applying for SIVs have unfortunately found the process to be cumbersome, long, and complicated. Many of those lucky enough to be granted a visa waited for years for the process to be completed. For those whose applications are still pending, every day is still marred by uncertainty, fear, and fading hope. According to a recent Joint Department of State/Department of Homeland Security Report, approximately 15,000 SIV applications for Iraqi and Afghan applicants and their dependents remain pending, at various stages of the application process.

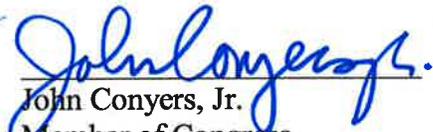
While we understand the need to conduct appropriate security screenings on applicants, we remain cognizant that more must be done to process applications quickly and efficiently. We commend the steps taken by the Administration to reduce the amount of time required to apply and go through the SIV application process. Many anecdotal reports have highlighted abductions, attacks on, and even the murder of SIV applicants as they waited for approval for visas, highlighting the necessity for further improving the application process.

President Obama's administration, through the Department of State, recently announced that it would raise the threshold of refugees admitted into the United States next year. We applaud this decision and look forward to working with the administration to ensure that the United States does its part to take in refugees from around the world. At the same time, we must keep our commitments to the Iraqi and Afghan nationals who risked their lives in service to our country. We therefore urge you to allocate the necessary resources to quickly process pending SIV applications and to respond to future applications in a timely manner. We appreciate your prompt attention to our request and look forward to your reply.

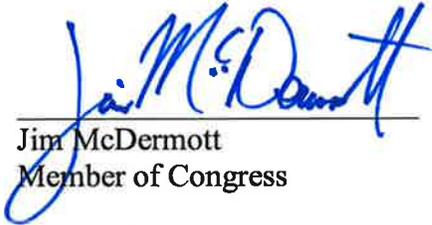
Sincerely,



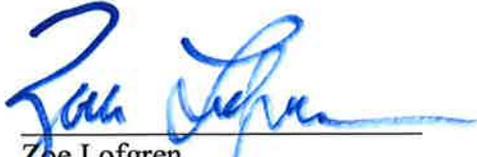
Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress



John Conyers, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Jim McDermott  
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



Michael M. Honda  
Member of Congress



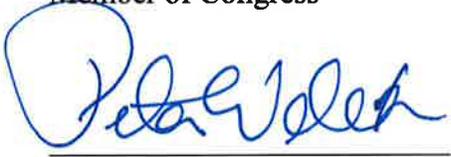
Betty McCollum  
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Chris Van Hollen  
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Albio Sires  
Member of Congress



Peter Welch  
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster  
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Mark Takano  
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