Dear Senators and Members of Congress,

We write as concerned veterans. In all wars, American service members fight alongside foreign allies, live within local communities, and build security partnerships. We could not complete our mission without the translators, engineers, security guards, embassy clerks, logisticians, cultural advisors, and soldiers who have stood by us.

As representatives of the U.S. government, we gave our word to protect these allies should they come under threat. Since 2006, this promise to those Iraqis and Afghans has been fulfilled by the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program.

In early June, Congress failed to keep that promise. For the first time in four years, Congress has not authorized any additional visas for Afghans as part of the National Defense Authorization Act.

What kind of message have we sent to the Afghans currently serving alongside the nearly 10,000 Americans serving in Afghanistan? We fear that it conveys that America has abandoned them, and in kind, they are now free to abandon our forward deployed troops. What incentive would any Afghan or other ally have to cooperate with and serve alongside the U.S. military?

Congressional inaction is putting our military at risk in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Over 7,800 Afghans who served with our troops are currently waiting for the government to process their visas. The State Department reports that Congress has authorized enough visas for only 3,200 of them, leaving at least 4,600 Afghans with one choice: flee or die.

There is still time to act. We, the undersigned veterans, representing every branch of military service and every American conflict dating back to Vietnam, urge Congress to do the following:

- 1. Authorize, at a minimum, 6,000 additional principal Special Immigrant Visas for Afghans.
- 2. Review and update the SIV program to address the current shortcomings to protecting all wartime allies.
- 3. Authorize the SIV program to continue for as long as the United States commits military forces (in either a combat or advisory/training role) in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- 4. Extend the Category 5 provision of the Direct Access program (currently only available for Iraqis) to the extended family of Afghan SIV applications.

Military service instills in a person certain values: Loyalty. Duty. Respect. Honor. Integrity. These values apply universally; to each other, to our nation, and also to all those who stood by our sides when we needed it most. Breaking our word directly violates these values.

Many of us can point to a moment when one of our foreign allies saved our lives – often by taking up arms against our common enemies. They acted because they believed in America, in our mission, and in the promise that was given. We urge Congress to set aside political differences to help our deployed troops accomplish the mission through keeping our promise to our wartime allies.

Since our first days of boot camp, we accepted and practiced the value: "leave no one behind." Keep our word. Don't leave anyone behind.

Very respectfully,

We the undersigned 36 retired military leaders and organizations representing hundreds of thousands of veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.

| IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN VETERANS OF AMERICA | GENERAL JOHNR. ALLEN, USMC (RET.) |
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| | GENERAL BRYAN D. BROWN, USA (RET.) |
| INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROJECT | GENERAL GEORGE W. CASEY, JR., USA (RET.) |
| | GENERAL PETER W. CHIARELLI, USA (RET.) |
| NO ONE LEFT BEHIND | GENERAL RICHARD H. CODY, USA (RET.) |
| | GENERAL JAMES T. CONWAY, USMC (RET.) |
| TRUMAN NATIONAL SECURITY PROJECT | ADMIRAL SAMUEL J. LOCKLEAR III, USN (RET.) |
| | GENERAL MONTGOMERY C. MEIGS, USA (RET.) |
| VETERANS FOR AMERICAN IDEALS | GENERAL STANLEY A. MCCHRYSTAL, USA (RET.) |
| | ADMIRAL WILLIAM H. MCRAVEN, USN (RET.) |
| VIEINAM VEIERANS OF AMERICA | GENERAL RICHARD B. MYERS, USAF (RET.) |
| | GENERAL H. HUGH SHELTON, USA (RET.) |
| | LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID W. BARNO, USA (RET.) |
| | LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILLIAM B. CALDWELL IV, USA (RET.) |
| | LIEUTENANT GENERAL CHARLES T. CLEVELAND, USA (RET.) |
| | LIEUTENANT GENERAL FRANK HELMICK, USA (RET.) |
| | LIEUTENANT GENERAL MARK P. HERTLING, USA (RET.) |
| | VICE ADMIRAL CONRAD C. LAUTENBACHER, JR. USN (RET.) |
| | VICE ADMIRAL JOSEPH MCGUIRE, USN (RET.) |
| | LIEUTENANT GENERAL CHARLES OTSTOTT, USA (RET.) |
| | LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILLIAM P. TANGNEY, USA (RET.) |
| | MAJOR GENERAL JUAN G. AYALA, USMC (RET.) |
| | MAJOR GENERAL JOHN BATISTE, USA (RET.) |
| | MAJOR GENERAL KENNETH R. BOWRA, USA (RET.) |
| | MAJOR GENERAL PAUL D. EATON, USMC (RET.) |
| | MAJOR GENERAL DAVID L. GRANGE, USA (RET.) |
| | MAJOR GENERAL EDWARD M. REEDER, JR., USA (RET.) |
| | MAJOR GENERAL SYDNEY SHACHNOW, USA (RET.) |
| | MAJOR GENERAL LEROY N. SUDDATH, JR., USA (RET.) |
| | BRIGADIER GENERAL LEKOT N. SUDDAIII, J.K., USA (REI.) |
| | BRIGADIER GENERAL GARY M. JONES, USA (REI.) |
| | BRIGADIER GENERAL GART M. JONES, USA (REI.) BRIGADIER GENERAL MURRAY G. SAGSVEEN, USA (REI.) |
| | SERGEANT GARY BEIKIRCH, USA |
| | MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT |
| | |
| | CAPTAIN FLORENT GROBERG, USA (RET.), |
| | MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT |
| | AMBASSADOR JAMES F. JEFFREY (US ARMY VEIERAN) |
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