

VICTORY FOR AFGHANS WHO SERVED WITH AMERICAN FORCES



Fighting for our allies. Winning with our values.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN ARMS

As veterans, we served with and often depended on interpreters, translators, and other local allies to carry out missions in Afghanistan. Many of these individuals' lives are now in danger as a result of their service.

When we served in uniform, we were taught to *never leave anyone behind*. Though we've taken that uniform off, our service to this country and its values hasn't ended. Neither did the promise we made to our allies.

For the last two years, we've been fighting to keep that promise. That fight's not over—but we're succeeding.

THE BATTLE AT HOME

In Washington, D.C.

Late last year, the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program was set to expire. Thousands of our imperiled Afghan allies would have been barred from seeking safety in America. To prevent this, we convened a large group of veterans in Washington, D.C. to persuade lawmakers that our nation has a moral obligation to help our allies, an obligation that veterans take personally.



After meeting with lawmakers from both parties, we celebrated a partial victory in December when the Special Immigrant Visa program was renewed for four years in the National Defense Authorization Act. Unfortunately, Congress only authorized 1,500 visas for 2017.

We successfully saved the program, but we knew it wasn't enough.

From Coast to Coast

Leaving Washington, our group wasn't ready to settle for results that fell short of the promise our country made to our partners. Many thousands of our Afghan allies were waiting for a visa.

On March 9, 2017, we received word that the U.S. Embassy in Kabul had stopped conducting Special Immigrant Visa interviews altogether. The new visas authorized by Congress in December were all but gone.

Our Vets for American Ideals leaders got to work organizing in their own communities.

While Congress was in recess, groups of veterans in 10 states met with 20 Members of Congress in districts ranging from coast to coast.



We spoke at rallies, welcomed Afghan SIV families at airports, and signed petitions.

Our strategy was simple: win our Afghan allies 2,500 more visas for 2017, to make up the difference between the 4,000 we had requested and 1,500 that Congress authorized.

BUILDING A MOVEMENT

By the Spring of 2017, our membership had swelled to over 2,500 veterans from across the nation. Leveraging our networks, we partnered with other veteran organizations like Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans for America, No One Left Behind, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Association of the U.S. Army.

We sent letters to every member of Congress from our coalition, which represents over 150,000 military veterans. We organized a response from respected military leaders like retired 4-star General Carter Ham and national security experts like retired Ambassadors James Jeffrey and Richard Olson.



KEEPING OUR PROMISE

When Congress reconvened in April to take up legislation to fund the government, we saw an opportunity.

Again, we gathered in Washington, D.C. with a large group of veterans. We met with 25 Congressional offices and spoke with key members of Congress and their staff.

We made our case as veterans, national security experts and, most importantly, as engaged citizens.

And we won.

Congress heard our voices. In a spending bill passed on May 4, 2017, Congress authorized 2,500 additional visas for our Afghan allies. We made our goal.

But the fight is not over. As long as we remain in Afghanistan, there is the potential that Afghan allies will need our help. As veterans, it's our mission to make sure they get it. ■

