

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 5, 2020

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Thornberry:

As House and Senate conferees negotiate the final Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we encourage you to include language to support the President's FY2021 request to reauthorize an additional 4,000 Afghan Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) to be made available for those eligible for special immigrant status under the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009, bringing the total number of special immigrant visas authorized to 26,500. Section 1212 of the House NDAA, H.R. 6395, which was approved in the House on July 21, contains placeholder language to insert this language into the bill.

The Afghan SIV program allows Afghans who supported and saved the lives of U.S. service members and diplomatic personnel in Afghanistan a means to escape life-threatening situations as a result of their work supporting Americans. Each applicant applying under this program has to demonstrate two years of faithful and valuable service to the United States in Afghanistan as well as documented threats to their safety prior to applying to the program. The integrity of this program is absolutely essential to recruiting more Afghans willing to support our work.

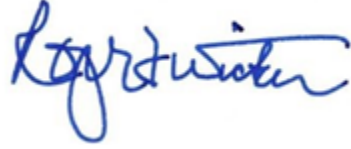
Through this program, the United States is able to demonstrate our commitment to those who put themselves at risk—encouraging others in Afghanistan and worldwide to do the same for our troops and diplomatic corps. If Congress fails to authorize these additional visas, thousands of Afghans in the application pipeline or otherwise eligible to apply will be in jeopardy.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with you to include this provision in the final NDAA.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jeanne Shaheen in blue ink.

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Roger Wicker in blue ink.

Roger Wicker
United States Senator