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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-2306

September 1, 2022

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President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On August 30, 2021, your Administration ended the United States military effort in Afghanistan, precipitating the rapid fall of the country to the Taliban. In the last two weeks of our withdrawal, 13 servicemembers were killed, and many other Americans were left behind.

One year later, there may still be United States citizens in Afghanistan who wish to leave that country but have so far been unable to do so.<sup>1</sup> If accurate, we must do everything possible to bring these individuals home.

Additionally, we have a moral responsibility to help the Afghan partners who assisted United States forces. As recently as May, the Department of State estimated that there are still between 70,000 and 160,000 Afghans eligible for Special Immigrant Visas (SIV).<sup>2</sup>

Well before the final withdrawal, I was greatly concerned about the fate of our Afghan partners, as I expressed in a July 14, 2021, letter to you; I am just as concerned today. These individuals undoubtedly saved the lives of countless American servicemembers. Now, many of them are at the mercy of the Taliban, which has unsurprisingly reestablished a brutal regime.

To ensure our citizens are protected and those who helped our nation's cause receive fair support, I respectfully seek answers to the following questions:

- Do the 800 United States citizens recently reported by *Politico* to have been evacuated from Afghanistan since August 2021<sup>3</sup> represent the entirety of United States citizens hoping to leave that country?
- On April 28, 2022, Secretary of State Antony Blinken testified that there are “at present 126, as of a few days ago, American citizens remaining, of whom 37 seek to leave and that we are assisting.”<sup>4</sup> Have the 37 American citizens Secretary Blinken referenced been evacuated?

<sup>1</sup> Courtney Kube, “Republicans, Veterans' Groups Ask for Investigation, Hearings on Biden Admin's Handling of Afghan Exit,” *NBC News*, June 23, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/republicans-veterans-groups-ask-investigation-hearings-biden-admins-ha-rcna35086>.

<sup>2</sup> Alex Thompson and Allie Bice, “Biden's broken promise to SIV holders,” *Politico*, May 16, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/west-wing-playbook/2022/05/16/bidens-broken-promise-to-siv-holders-00032682>.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Desiderio, Lara Seligman, and Alexander Ward, “800 Americans Evacuated From Afghanistan Since Taliban Takeover,” *Politico*, August 14, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/08/14/afghanistan-800-evacuated-taliban-00051525>

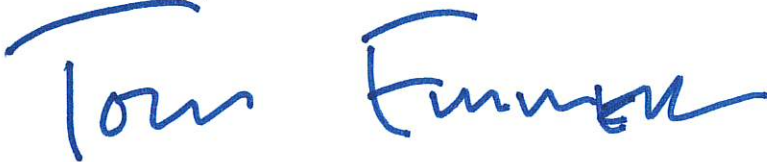
<sup>4</sup> Testimony of Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in U.S. Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *The State Department's Foreign Policy Priorities and the FY23 Budget Request*

- As earlier indicated, the Department of State estimated in May that there are between 70,000 and 160,000 Afghans eligible for SIVs. Does the Department intend to release this information in a publicly available report explaining how it determined this estimate?
- *Foreign Policy* recently reported that there are “around 77,200 Afghans who have at least begun applying for a SIV to the United States still in Afghanistan, of which 10,400 primary applicants have received...chief of mission approval.”<sup>5</sup> Is the Department of State able to confirm these figures and/or provide updated statistics?
- Because the United States embassy in Kabul suspended all operations on August 31, 2021, the Department of State allows SIV interviews to occur at a U.S. embassy or consulate outside Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup> What efforts has your Administration made to help Afghan SIV applicants reach visa processing posts outside of their home country? Would the Department of State be able to provide a list of the most common countries in which Afghan SIV interviews are conducted?
- Last month, your Administration announced that SIV applicants will no longer be required to file paperwork (the Form I-360 Petition) with the Department of Homeland Security’s U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.<sup>7</sup> Has this effort significantly improved SIV processing times? What further procedural reforms has your Administration considered to process Afghan SIV applications more efficiently?

Most Americans – including me – will never forget the shocking events of August 2021. We must now continue to work to remedy the consequences.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of my questions.

Sincerely,



Tom Emmer  
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Antony Blinken, Secretary of State  
CC: The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security

<sup>5</sup> Robbie Gramer, Mary Yang, and Kelly Kimball, “Afghans Promised a Way Out are Still Trapped by Red Tape,” *Foreign Policy*, August 9, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/08/09/afghanistan-evacuation-siv-visa-taliban-troops-immigration/>.

<sup>6</sup> “U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan Status,” *United States Embassy in Afghanistan*, accessed September 1, 2022, <https://af.usembassy.gov/u-s-embassy-in-afghanistan-status/>.

<sup>7</sup> “Special Immigrant Visas for Afghans – Who Were Employed by/on Behalf of the U.S. Government,” *United States Department of State*, accessed September 1, 2022, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/special-immg-visa-afghans-employed-us-gov.html>.