

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

November 17, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

As you continue to deliberate over effective strategy for Afghanistan, we want to thank you, first and foremost, for taking the appropriate time to discern and consider one of the most serious foreign policy concerns facing America today. The way forward in Afghanistan is far from clear, and we greatly appreciate your commitment to consider multiple perspectives and policy prescriptions. In that light, we offer you the following reflections and recommendations.

We are concerned about committing additional US troops and taxpayer dollars in Afghanistan, especially when the US mission is unclear and when methods for measuring mission effectiveness are underdeveloped or nonexistent.

We are concerned about the economic reconstruction and stabilization strategy, specifically that foreign aid has thus far failed to rebuild Afghan institutions, infrastructure, and individual capacity.

We are concerned about the political legitimacy and corruption of the Afghan government, a problem exacerbated by mismanaged elections, foreign aid distribution, and foreign intelligence and security alliances.

Our perspectives have manifested, formally and informally, via Congressional Progressive Caucus Member-led legislation: Requesting a timeline for eventual troop withdrawal (H.R. 2404, Rep McGovern); requesting measurements for mission success; prohibiting funds for additional troop surges (H.R. 3699, Rep Lee); and reorienting the current mission to invest 80 percent of foreign resources into political and economic development, with 20 percent towards security, e.g. peacekeeping, Afghan police/army training (Reps Honda and Grijalva). Additionally, our overall strategy in Afghanistan must be guided by smart security, a policy that will put diplomacy and development above the use of force (H. Res. 363, Rep. Woolsey)

We recommend, therefore, a comprehensive rethinking of our military mission, a complete redesign of our reconstruction and stabilization strategy and a courageous reconciliation strategy for Afghanistan.

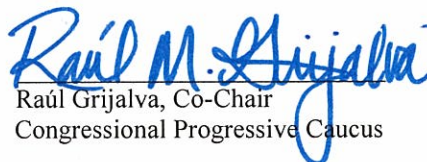
With your leadership, we now have an opportunity to realign our defense, development and diplomatic engagement to ensure political, economic and social security for a nation deeply impoverished and insecure. This new tack, if taken today, can transform the conflict while remaining consistent with America's strategic interests.

We respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss the details of each component in depth as we collectively work towards peace and stability within Afghanistan and within the region.

Sincerely,




Michael Honda, Chair  
Afghanistan Taskforce  
Congressional Progressive Caucus

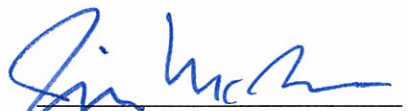


Raúl Grijalva, Co-Chair  
Congressional Progressive Caucus



Lynn Woolsey, Co-Chair  
Congressional Progressive Caucus

  
Barbara Lee, Member  
Congressional Progressive Caucus

  
James McGovern, Member  
Congressional Progressive Caucus