

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

October 28, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to express my support for your Administration's efforts to define a new strategy for the conflict in Afghanistan. Our nation must find a way to capture Osama bin Laden, expel al Qaeda from Afghanistan and win the trust of the Afghan people. I urge you to give General McChrystal's assessment fair consideration and, should you decide to adopt his strategy, provide him the resources he needs to succeed. The invasion of Iraq diverted our attention from the threat in Afghanistan and I am pleased that your administration has decided to embark on a new comprehensive strategy.

Afghanistan and Pakistan remains the most critical arena for our country's national security. Recent reports of the Taliban moving beyond their traditional stronghold in the south and east and threatening formerly stable areas in the north and west highlight the threat we face with an under-resourced campaign or precipitous withdrawal. Thus, I strongly support the White House declaration that withdrawal is not an option under consideration. We cannot risk the return of a safe haven for al Qaeda from which to plot another attack against the United States. Perhaps even more menacing is the potential for a failed state in Afghanistan to destabilize the neighboring civilian government in Pakistan and increase the risk of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of al Qaeda or other terrorist groups.

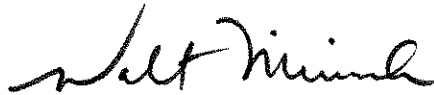
A visible security force in local communities will send a message to the Afghan population that we are committed to ensuring a lasting peace in the country. However, this will require support from our Afghan partners as we train and equip the Afghan National Army and local police forces. Widespread fraud in the recent Presidential election has cast doubt on the legitimacy of the government in Kabul. We must continue align ourselves with those Afghan officials who are determined to make political reforms and tackle corruption. Even in the absence of a strong central government at the current moment, I am hopeful that a new strategy coupled with a larger force will enable us to negotiate with tribal authorities and help win the trust of the local population.

Economic programs that offer meaningful incentives to farmers and landowners, including elements of the Taliban movement, will be a key element to convincing the local population to break with and cease sheltering members of al Qaeda. While increased military force alone is not the answer, a new strategy for providing security, greater effort to align our interests with that of existing Tribal leadership in the more

remote areas of the country, and assistance with economic development will be key to eliminating a sanctuary for al Qaeda and its local allies and move the country toward a more stable and secure future.

I thank you for your strong leadership on this issue and appreciate your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Walt Minnick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Walt" being more prominent than the last name "Minnick".

Walt Minnick  
Member of Congress