

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 7, 2012

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2010 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2010 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

We write to urge you to support the amendment promoting the security of Afghan women and girls during the conferencing of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY2013. This amendment passed with broad bipartisan backing in the Senate, and has received strong support from U.S., Afghan and international organizations that promote human rights and women's rights. Ensuring that this provision is included in the final version of the NDAA will go a long way toward achieving our overall goal of a secure and stable Afghanistan for the future.

The United States and our international partners are committed to supporting the rights, opportunities, and security of Afghan women and girls. Afghan women have made enormous progress since 2001, and have the potential to make major contributions to the political and economic future of their country. However, the transfer of security responsibility to Afghan forces threatens to once again restrict Afghan women's mobility and opportunities for participation in public life. Deterioration in women's security can be an early indicator of worsening security conditions overall.

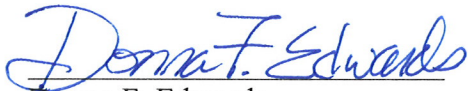
In order to minimize the potential negative impact of the transition process on Afghan women and girls, the United States must take steps to strengthen women's security in the near term and lay a foundation for Afghan women's full participation going forward. This amendment to the NDAA would require the Department of Defense (DOD) to produce a plan to promote the security of Afghan women and girls during the transition process by monitoring and responding to changes in women's security, improving gender sensitivity and responsiveness among Afghan

National Security personnel, and increasing the recruitment and retention of women in the Afghan National Security Forces. It would also require the DOD to include an assessment of actions taken to implement the plan and its results in its semi-annual reports to Congress on progress toward security and stability in Afghanistan.

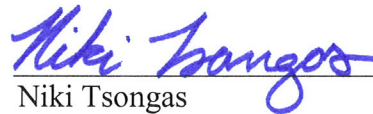
We believe strongly that the Department of Defense can and should do more to promote Afghan women's security. The transition process gives the United States and our international partners an opportunity to strengthen women's rights and lay the foundation for women's full participation in all aspects of Afghan society in the future. It is critical that we focus on this issue between now and 2014 or risk backsliding on the progress that has been made over the last decade. Losing those gains will have a major negative impact on all Afghans and jeopardize the future security and stability of the country.

We therefore urge you to support this amendment and ensure that it is included in the final version of this year's NDAA. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to promote the rights and opportunities of women and girls in Afghanistan.

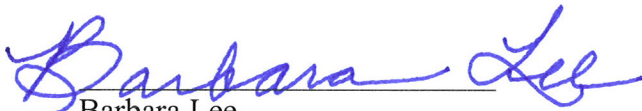
Sincerely,



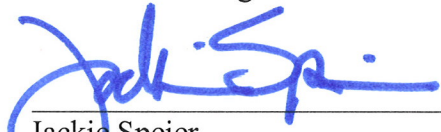
Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress



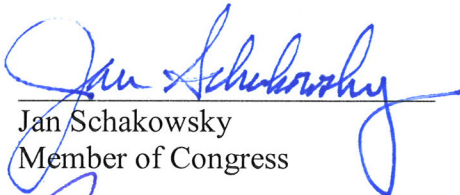
Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



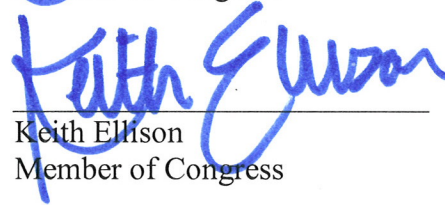
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



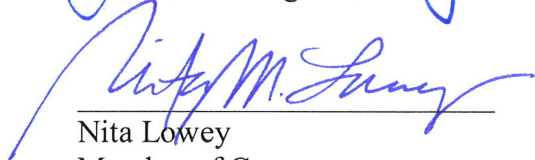
Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



Nita Lowey
Member of Congress