

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0305

November 11, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

Under your leadership, our nation has achieved unprecedented prosperity. Now, as we observe Veterans Day, I hope you will look abroad and continue to strategically draw down our nation's military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq.

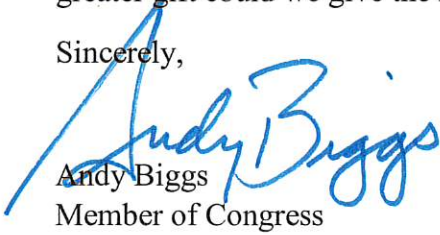
The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have both been enormously costly in lives and dollars. In the case of Afghanistan, instead of merely conducting counterterrorism operations in the wake the September 11, 2001, attacks, our troops engaged in full-scale nation-building efforts both before and after the 2011 killing of Osama bin Laden in neighboring *Pakistan*, a supposed ally of the United States. Having now lasted over 19 years, the war in Afghanistan has been the longest overseas conflict in American history. But, sadly, the situation on the ground today looks much the same now as it did back in 2001, with the Taliban in control of much of the country.

And then there is Iraq. Over the last 18 years, our forces toppled Saddam Hussein's government and successfully fought terrorists of many different stripes in Iraq, including the Islamic State. But these achievements have simply not been worth the cost. Instead of focusing on limited aims, we fell into the same nation-building, "peacekeeping" trap in Iraq that ensnared us in Afghanistan, even after major combat operations officially ended in 2011. Today, Iraq's government is shaky at best, addicted to continuing foreign assistance, and easily susceptible to pressure from outside actors, especially Iran.

Nation-building doesn't work, as you immediately recognized upon taking office: Afghanistan and Iraq today are clearly not beacons of democracy, stability, or prosperity, despite the thousands of American lives and trillions of dollars we have sacrificed to try to remake these countries. None of this is a criticism of our brave men in women in uniform, who have performed heroically in these and all other overseas engagements. Instead, it is an indictment of Washington's broken foreign policy establishment, which is dominated by arm-chair idealists who never seem to grasp the messy realities on the ground.

I commend your efforts so far to bring our engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq to an end, including your bold decision to open negotiations with the Taliban and your ambitious plan to remove thousands of United States servicemembers from these two countries. I urge you to continue to aggressively pursue these and all other related efforts in the coming weeks. What greater gift could we give the American people as we head into the holiday season?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andy Biggs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "A".

Andy Biggs
Member of Congress