

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 9, 2015

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

Dear Mr. President,

We write to express our deep concern about your recent announcement to maintain nearly 10,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan through the end of 2016, and thousands to remain deployed in Afghanistan well into 2017. We urge you to reconsider this decision and not to abandon your vision to complete the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan by the end of your term in office.

Mr. President, Afghanistan has become not only the war that will never end, it is the war that will never be won. What began as a response against terrorist groups operating out of Afghanistan that launched attacks on the United States has transformed into the longest -running overseas war in American history.

The Vietnam War lasted about 10 years; U.S. involvement in World War II about four years; the U.S. Civil War lasted four years. The United States is now facing its 15th year of war in Afghanistan.

There have been about 3,500 coalition casualties in Afghanistan, including almost 2,300 U.S. service members. Over 20,000 American troops have been wounded, and uncounted thousands suffer from mental and emotional wounds that may persist for a lifetime.

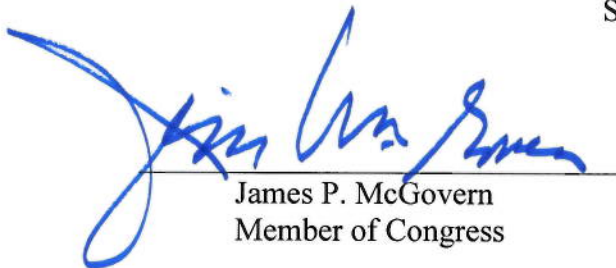
Last year, the Congressional Research Service estimated that the cost of the war in Afghanistan was \$686 billion. A more complete estimate of the costs of both the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq puts them between \$4 and \$6 trillion, including the long-term medical care and disability compensation for service members, veterans and families, as Harvard economist Linda Bilmes calculated in 2013. The current projected cost for continuing the war in Afghanistan for Fiscal Year 2016 is \$42.5 billion. The CRS estimate for maintaining a 10,000 service member troop level is \$50 billion per year. These additional funds would be added to the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) account and therefore continue to increase the debt generated by these long-term "off-budget" costs.

As you have stated, we have all learned that it's harder to end wars than it is to begin them. Recent attacks by Taliban and even reported ISIS forces demonstrate, victory in Afghanistan remains as elusive as ever; the Afghanistan military and police forces have yet to step up and take over the security and protection of their own people; and the government in Kabul remains riven with corruption, crony politics and sectarian divisions.

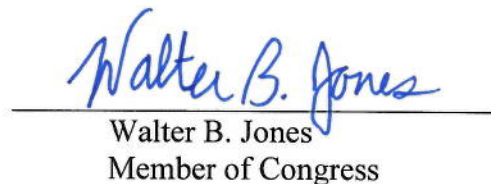
While our men and women in uniform are immensely capable, this is a war that the United States cannot win. We strongly believe that regardless of what the situation in Afghanistan is, there simply is no military solution American troops can achieve. More U.S. troops, more time, more money and more casualties will simply not bring the war to a close or peace and prosperity to the Afghan nation. Only a political solution can end the conflict and violence in Afghanistan. Only the Afghan people and their leaders can accomplish this.

Mr. President, we urge you to reconsider your recent decision and end U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan promptly.

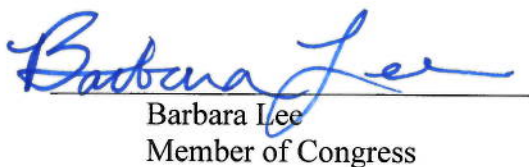
Sincerely,



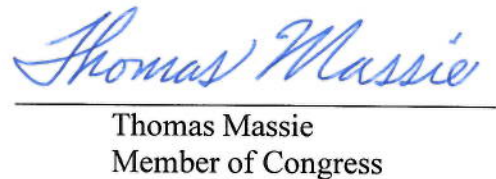
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress



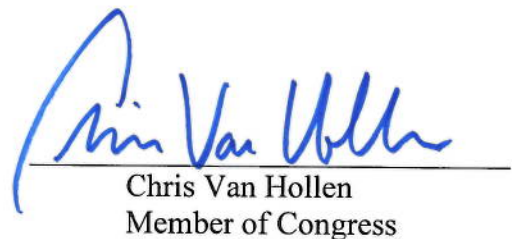
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



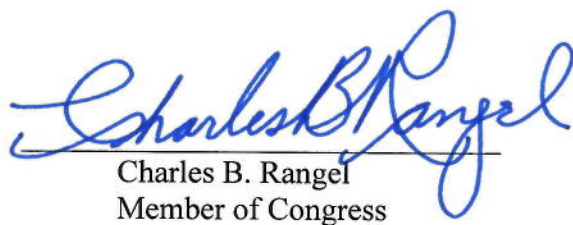
Thomas Massie
Member of Congress



John Lewis
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress



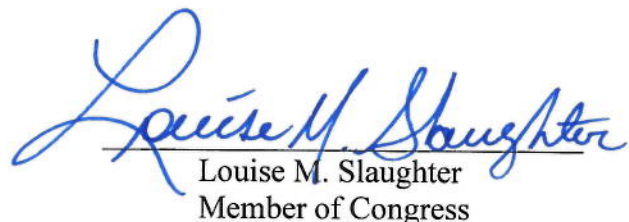
Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress




Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress




Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress

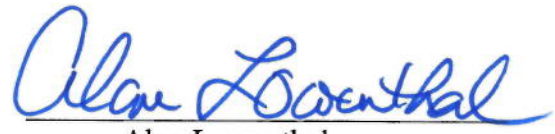

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress


Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress


Alan Grayson
Member of Congress


Richard M. Nolan
Member of Congress


Sam Farr
Member of Congress


Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress


Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress


Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable John F. Kerry, Secretary of State
Anne Patterson, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs