

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 17, 2012

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to urge the United States to work with our North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies during the upcoming 25th annual NATO Summit in Chicago to protect the rights of women in Afghanistan and ensure the inclusion and consideration of women and girls in these security discussions. As U.S. and allied troops begin to fully transition out of Afghanistan in 2014, the 2012 Chicago NATO Summit will provide an important opportunity for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to outline its commitment to support important rights of Afghan women, including freedom of movement, full participation in public life, freedom from violence, access to government services, and security.

It is important to note, in this transitional period, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated "it is essential that women's rights and women's opportunities are not sacrificed or trampled on in the reconciliation process." Similarly, as a longtime supporter of Afghan women's rights, Former First Lady Laura Bush recognized the need for a long-term commitment to the women of Afghanistan, stating "American women really stand in solidarity with the women in Afghanistan."

We recognize the United States, along with the international community, has worked hard to dramatically improve the lives of Afghan women. Specifically, since the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan, 3 million girls are now being educated after years of restrictions, the rates of maternal and infant mortality have declined, and women continue to make political and economic progress throughout the country. We applaud your efforts this past December to implement the first ever U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security. This plan expresses the commitment of your administration to protect the rights and priorities of women and girls across the world, and particularly in Afghanistan, during peace negotiations and peacebuilding activities.

We remain concerned these gains may be jeopardized as international troops withdraw. During the important upcoming summit meetings, we urge you to build on the U.S. National Action Plan to ensure that the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan will not jeopardize the protections and improvements made over the last decade to support women's inclusion and security across the country. We urge you to ensure that the official declaration at the close of the summit must

convey a clear message that maintains the commitment of the United States and other NATO member countries to ensuring that women remain a focus in the security and political transition.

It is our hope that the declaration and related NATO statements would ensure gender equality at the negotiation tables, establish clear mechanisms to monitor and track the impact of the transition on Afghan women and girls, require plans to correct any negative trends, and focus on policies and ensure funding is dedicated to recruit, train, integrate, and retain women in the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF). In addition, it is essential to the gains made by all Afghans that security discussions begin at once to assure that an effective ANSF can support a free and fair presidential election in 2014 which coincides with the US troop transition that year.

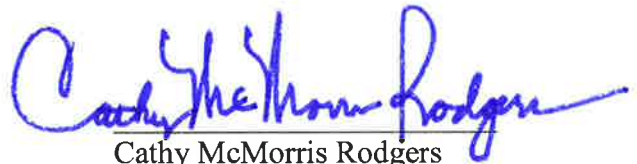
Women in Afghanistan and advocates from around the world share the hope that even in the drawdown there will continue to be a strong focus and commitment to women's security and their rights under the constitution of Afghanistan.

We believe that a successful transition in Afghanistan must be led by the people of Afghanistan and that the United States and NATO countries should continue to partner in that effort. We respectfully request that you continue to make Afghan women's rights a priority during the Chicago NATO Summit and ensure their security and engagement in the transition.

Sincerely,



Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



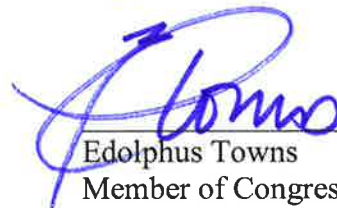
Russ Carnahan
Member of Congress



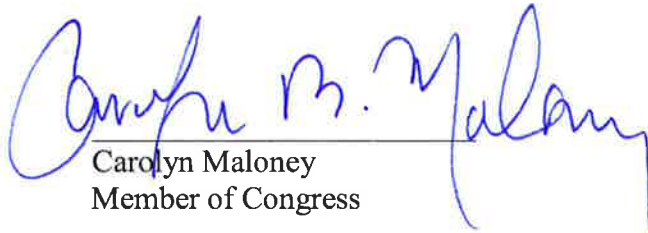
Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



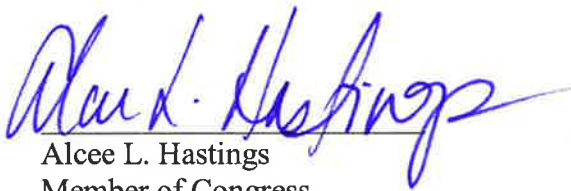
Edolphus Towns
Member of Congress

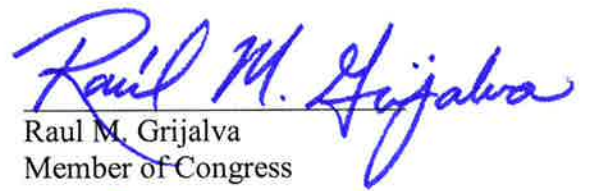



Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress



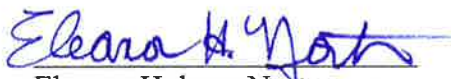
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress


Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress


Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

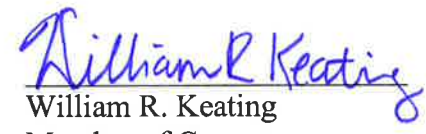

Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.
Member of Congress


Bob Filner
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress


Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

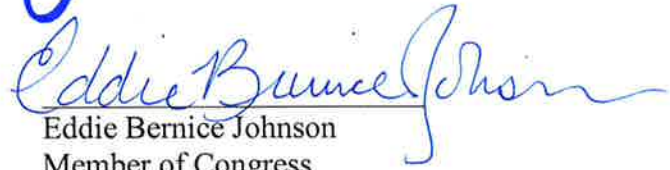

Jean Schmidt
Member of Congress

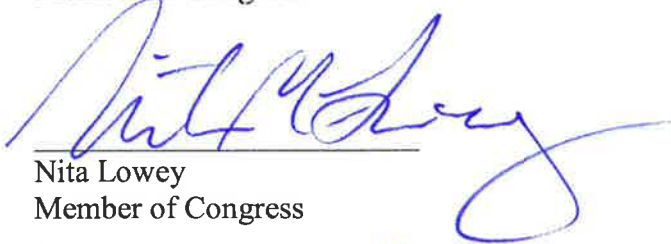

William R. Keating
Member of Congress

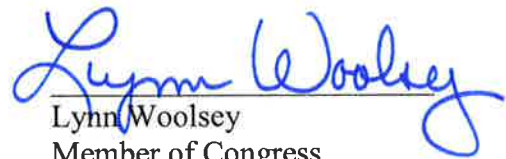

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress


Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Laura Richardson
Member of Congress

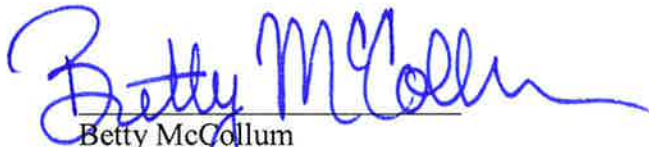

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress


Nita Lowey
Member of Congress

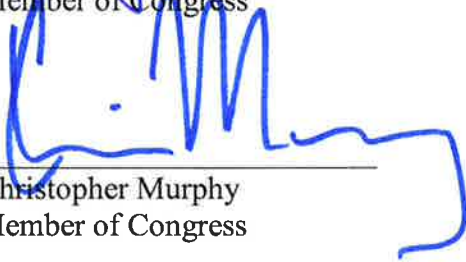

Lynn Woolsey
Member of Congress


Sam Farr
Member of Congress


Jaime Herrera-Beutler
Member of Congress



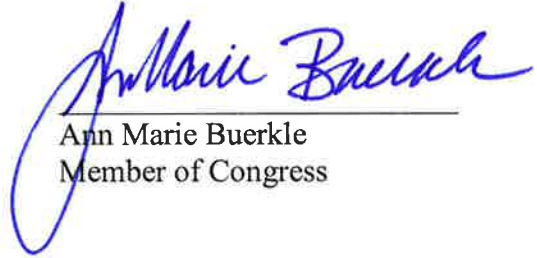
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Christopher Murphy
Member of Congress



Charles Rangel
Member of Congress



Ann Marie Buerkle
Member of Congress