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Veterans, Afghan Evacuees Urge Congress to Pass Afghan Adjustment Act

One Year After Fall of Kabul, Veteran and Refugee Groups Rally for Bipartisan Bill to Provide Afghan Allies Path to Citizenship

Washington – Standing next to the U.S. Capitol, a group of veterans and refugee groups including #AfghanEvac urged Congress to pass the newly-introduced Afghan Adjustment Act.

“We are calling on Congress to approve the Afghan Adjustment Act and make sure the United States keeps its commitments to its Afghan allies — and the U.S. armed service members, veterans, and civilians who worked alongside them,” said Shawn VanDiver, a Navy veteran and founder of #AfghanEvac.

The bill will enable newly arrived Afghans to go through the immigration process, undergo all necessary security reviews, and have a path forward to lawful permanent residency here in the United States. Those who apply under this bill would undergo a robust vetting process. It would mirror efforts made by the U.S. government for Vietnamese and South Asian refugees following the fall of Saigon.

“Thousands of American veterans, frontline civilians, and volunteers dropped everything 12 months ago to do our part, and to help pick up the pieces after the fall of Kabul. Today our message to Congress is this: it’s time to do your part to help America lift up its allies,” VanDiver said. “Voting for the Afghan Adjustment Act is voting for American veterans. It is voting for American values. It is voting to uphold America’s vow to stand with those who have stood with us.”

Veterans and Afghan allies at the news conference emphasized their shared service and sacrifice over the course of America’s longest war, while refugee advocates and Afghan-American leaders will speak to the importance of lasting safety and stability in their successful resettlement.
As a result of the U.S.'s hurried evacuation from Afghanistan, the vast majority of Afghan evacuees were admitted to the country on a temporary basis under “humanitarian parole,” which does not confer a direct pathway to lawful permanent residence.

“We don't want to be a burden on the U.S government. We Afghans have already seen so many ups and downs, so much violence. We are hard-working people — we just need to have our proper documentation and adjustment of status so we can be stable and build a new life here. I am here again to ask Congress, the House and Senate, all political leaders to get together and pass the Afghan Adjustment Act,” said Abdul “Lucky” Manan, who served as an interpreter with U.S. forces in Afghanistan for over a decade and now sits on the Board of #AfghanEvac. “We Afghans have already sacrificed our families, friends, and loved ones. We deserve a better life and the American dream that I am enjoying today with my family.”

In order to provide such a pathway, as the U.S. has previously done for every generation of modern wartime evacuees, the Afghan Adjustment Act would allow eligible Afghan evacuees to apply for lawful permanent residence in the U.S. after one or two years of physical presence in the country.

“This legislation is bipartisan. This is not about red or blue – this is about red, white and blue,” said VanDiver. “It comprehensively adjusts the status of the folks we already brought here and provides a more streamlined process for those who were left behind, and creates an additional level of vetting for the people we brought in during the military evacuation to ensure that national security is protected.”

The more than 200 organizations that make up the #AfghanEvac coalition have long been advocating for ways to provide new Afghan community members with the stability they need to resettle and thrive in their new lives here.

For twenty years, Afghan allies worked and fought side-by-side with U.S. and allied forces through the longest war in American history. The #AfghanEvac coalition is committed to ensuring that their service, partnership, and commitment to American ideals is honored.

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