



**OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**

Vermont State House  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05602

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
437 Russell Senate Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
332 Dirksen Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Peter Welch  
2187 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

February 16, 2022

Dear Senator Leahy, Senator Sanders, and Representative Welch:

In recent weeks, my office has received an outpouring of contact from Vermonters wishing to support Afghans arriving in Vermont. I'm proud of their advocacy, and right to give voice to their concerns, which I also share.

As more Afghan refugees arrive in the United States and are welcomed to Vermont, many face significant hurdles in their journey to U.S. citizenship. Some have received Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) granting them permanent resident status after one year. More commonly, because of the rapid emergency evacuation out of Afghanistan, Afghans have been admitted as "humanitarian parolees". In this case, they must first apply for and be granted asylum, a legal process that can take many years and require significant, costly legal representation. Making matters worse, Vermont lacks qualified legal representation to handle additional asylum cases. As a result, Afghan refugees are subject to greater vulnerabilities while contending with an uncertain future.

To allow "humanitarian parolees" to effectively resettle in Vermont without further trauma and to become independent, contributing, members of our community, Congress must immediately pass an Afghan Adjustment Act. An Afghan Adjustment Act would allow certain Afghan evacuees to apply for permanent resident status after one year of being paroled. Passing an Afghan Adjustment Act would relieve the immediate burden on the SIV process — which currently has over 18,000 backlogged cases. Moreover, the asylum process currently has over 1 million backlogged cases.

Similar legislation has been used several times in the past to assist groups who have arrived in the United States because of an emergency situation in their home country. For example, in 1966 Congress passed a bill to allow Cuban parolees who fled the communist regime to apply for legal permanent status after one year of residence in the country. Similarly, Congress acted in 1977 to allow for more than 150,000 refugees from Southeast Asia to apply for permanent residence.

An Afghan Adjustment Act would fulfill our humanitarian obligation to vulnerable Afghans contending with uncertain futures. Moreover, passing an Afghan Adjustment Act is the least our country can do to honor the sacrifices of our Afghan Allies and the risks associated with their service.

Your leadership on refugee resettlement has always set Vermont apart. Our communities stand ready to welcome Afghans. Let's ensure they have the immigration status and access to support necessary to successfully rebuild their lives in the Green Mountain State. I hope you will do all you can to quickly pass an Afghan Adjustment Act.

Sincerely,



Molly Gray

Vermont Lieutenant Governor

Cc:

Vermont Governor, Phil Scott

Vermont Senate President Pro Tempore, Becca Balint

Vermont House Speaker, Jill Krowinski