

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 28, 2007

Secretary Michael Chertoff  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20580

Secretary Condoleezza Rice  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Chertoff and Secretary Rice,

We are writing to urge you to take immediate steps to significantly expand the ability of our government to process refugee applications for Iraqis and special immigrant visas for Iraqi and Afghan translators and interpreters working for our government.

On April 19, Assistant Secretary of State Ellen Sauerbrey said the United States could accept 25,000 refugees in fiscal year 2007, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has referred 7,000 cases to our government. However, only 63 refugees from Iraq have been accepted by the United States this year.

In addition, on June 15, 2007 President Bush signed Public Law 110-36, which increased to 500 each year the number of visas available to these translators and interpreters for fiscal years 2007 and 2008 and 2009. Because of their service to the United States, these brave translators are in mortal danger every day in Iraq and Afghanistan. They now have a target on their back because of their service to our country, and we need to protect them by quickly granting them safe refuge in the United States. So far, however, only 34 translator visas have been issued, although 609 visa petitions have been approved. We are concerned that unless urgent steps are taken to expedite the processing, the lives of these translators will remain in jeopardy and a large percentage of the additional visas available this year will be lost.

America has a strong obligation to keep faith with the Iraqis and Afghans who have worked so bravely with us – and have often paid a terrible price for it – and those vulnerable individuals whose lives hang in the balance as a result of the war in Iraq.

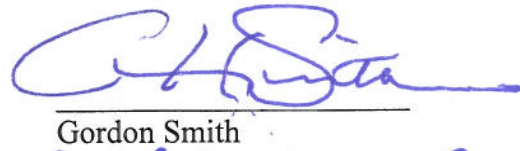
America needs to make sure that these vulnerable individuals who have been recommended by high-ranking military and State Department officials and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are processed in a timely and responsible way. We look forward to continuing to work with you on these issues.

With respect and appreciation,

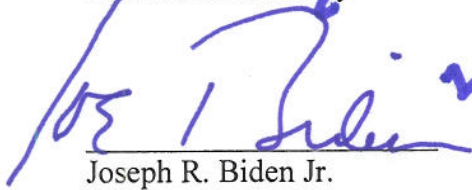
Sincerely,



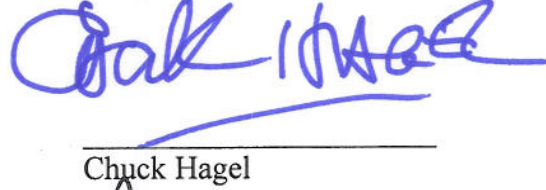
Edward M. Kennedy



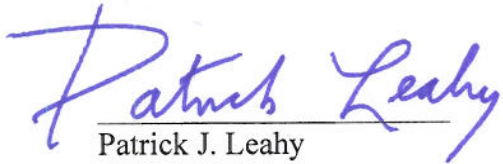
Gordon Smith



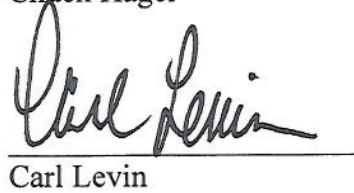
Joseph R. Biden Jr.



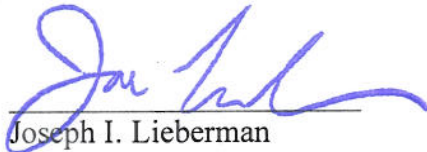
Chuck Hagel



Patrick J. Leahy



Carl Levin



Joseph I. Lieberman