

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 31, 2007

Chairman Ike Skelton  
Committee on Armed Services  
2120 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Duncan Hunter  
Committee on Armed Services  
2340 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Skelton and Ranking Member Hunter,

As you work to conference together the House and Senate versions of the National Defense Authorization Act, we encourage you to support and strengthen the provisions addressing Iraqi refugees that were passed by the Senate.

Four and a half years after the fall of Baghdad, Iraq and its neighbors are in the midst of a humanitarian crisis. Whatever one believes about the future of the United States' engagement in Iraq, we have a responsibility to those innocent Iraqis who have been driven from their homes or fear for their lives every day.

The numbers are sobering. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees estimates that 4.5 million Iraqis have been made uprooted, 2.2 million of which have left for adjacent countries like Syria and Jordan. Every day, another 1,000 to 2,000 Iraqis continue to be displaced from their homes, and these figures likely underestimate the magnitude of the problem. These are the front lines of a regional humanitarian crisis, one that could easily destabilize Iraq's neighbors.

For one group in particular, our moral responsibility is unquestionable: Iraqis who are at risk because they helped the United States. Having cooperated with the United States military, the United Nations or even with a nongovernmental organization can mean a death sentence at the hands of any of the many sides in this deadly conflict. Tens of thousands of Iraqis, who worked as translators, drivers, even construction workers, live every day in fear of being targeted.

During Senate consideration of the Defense Authorization bill, Senator Kennedy offered an amendment based on a modified version of H.R.2265, the "Responsibility to Iraqi Refugees Act." We strongly support this amendment and urge you to do all you can to keep the sections it added in the final conference report.

However, we believe that the Senate amendment can be significantly strengthened by a number of changes, including those proposed by House Foreign Affairs and Judiciary Committees. We particularly wish to highlight the following: First, more must be done to require streamlined in-country processing under both the refugee and special immigrant programs. Second, special immigrants must be provided the same benefits as refugees to ensure they do not enter the United States and immediately face new hardship. Third, the legislation should provide for Priority 2 categorization of the family members of those who worked for a media or nongovernmental organization headquartered in the United

States. Fourth, the number of Iraqis admitted under both the refugee and special immigrant programs should be expanded beyond the Senate-passed levels. And fifth, additional focus, including the authorization of appropriations, should be given to assistance for refugees and internally displaced persons in the region. We also urge you to reject any effort to reduce the number of special immigrant visas or increase the length of service required under this program.

We continue to be impressed by the number of our brave men and women who have served in Iraq and returned home to advocate that more be done to help Iraqis at risk, particularly those who risked their lives in service to the United States.

We stand ready to work with you to ensure that the provisions that come out of the Defense Authorization conference are as strong and ambitious as possible.

Sincerely,

Earl Blumenauer

Allyson Hightower

Phil Nankut

Sheikh Jub Lee

Alan Smith

Shadegg

Jim Moran

Chris Shays

Carl Casey

Jerry Balch

Justin

Brian Baird

Darlene Hooley

Boyd

David Price

Edward J. Markey

Michael Walden

Robert W. Dold

Sam Lomax

John W. Doherty

Joe Sestak

Jim Murphy

Joseph R. Cardoza

Russ Holt

Shelley Berkley

Rep. Gohmert

Pete DeFazio

Michael E. Caputo

Maxine K. Hironaka

Tom Lill

John L. Stroh

Ernie M. Cook

Jim Langevin

Barbara Lee

D. Reed

cc: Chairman Tom Lantos, House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Chairman John Conyers, House Judiciary Committee  
Ranking Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Ranking Member Lamar Smith, House Judiciary Committee

Signatures:

1. Earl Blumenauer
2. Christopher Shays
3. Alcee L. Hastings
4. Earl Pomeroy
5. Bill Delahunt
6. Tammy Baldwin
7. Sheila Jackson-Lee
8. Joseph Crowley
9. Adam Smith
10. Brian Baird
11. John Dingell
12. Darlene Hooley
13. Jim Moran
14. Barney Frank
15. David Price
16. Rick Boucher
17. Edward J. Markey
18. Peter DeFazio
19. Michael M. Honda
20. Michael E. Capuano
21. Peter Welch
22. Mazie Hirono
23. Sam Farr
24. Tom Allen
25. John W. Olver
26. Jan Schakowsky
27. Joe Sestak
28. Betty McCollum
29. Jim McGovern
30. Jim Langevin
31. Jerrold Nadler
32. Barbara Lee
33. Rush Holt
34. David Reichert
35. Shelley Berkley