



Bill Summary: Support Our Afghan Partners Act of 2022

The Support Our Afghan Partners Act, or [H.R. 8628](#), is a bipartisan bill that aims to improve pathways to protection for Afghans left behind after the fall of Kabul to the Taliban. The bill was introduced by Representative Elissa Slotkin (D-Michigan) on July 29, 2022, and cosponsored by Representative Michael Waltz (R-Florida).

This text of the bill was included as an amendment in the House Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), an annual military spending bill. The House [passed](#) the NDAA— with the text of H.R. 8628 included — on July 14, 2022 with broad bipartisan support. The Senate is likely to vote on its version of the NDAA in the fall of 2022, but it is not yet clear whether the Senate will also include the Support Our Afghan Partners Act as an amendment.

The Support Our Afghan Partners Act of 2022 would:

Require the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, and other relevant federal agencies to better coordinate and increase support to Afghan Special Immigrant Visa applicants and Afghan referrals to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Process (USRAP).

These agencies would be required to:

- Increase staffing and personnel embassies and consulates in the region that are currently processing applications for nationals of Afghanistan.
- Reduce application processing times for Afghans at risk while continuing to ensure necessary and strict security vetting processes.
- Allow Afghan refugee referrals to complete the USRAP application process from within Afghanistan rather than having to relocate to a third country

Background

Following U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan one year ago and the subsequent fall of Kabul to the Taliban, hundreds of thousands of Afghans were displaced and vulnerable. Those most at risk included women leaders and activists, journalists and judges, and the hundreds of thousands who

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assisted the U.S. 20-year diplomatic and military effort in the country and are marked by their connection to the U.S.

In the weeks following the fall of Kabul, [over 100,000 Afghans](#) were evacuated to the U.S., predominantly under an expedited pathway called [humanitarian parole](#). However, tens of thousands of Afghans were left behind and at risk in Afghanistan and neighboring countries, including many with direct ties to the U.S. Only a few pathways exist for them to escape to safety and stability and resettle in the U.S., but each are slow-moving, dysfunctional, and plagued with serious challenges:

- [Humanitarian parole](#): Humanitarian parole provides temporary admission into the U.S. for urgent humanitarian reasons. Parole only provides two years of protection from deportation and does not by itself provide a pathway to legal permanent residency. After the evacuation, Afghans at risk submitted [over 60,000 applications for parole](#), generating nearly \$20 million in fees for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Less than a few hundred applications have been approved. Starting October 1st, the Biden administration reportedly will [no longer use humanitarian parole](#) to admit Afghans from abroad.
- [Special Immigrant Visa \(SIV\)](#): The Afghan SIV program provides a visa for Afghans who were employed by or on behalf of the U.S. military. This visa provides a pathway to legal permanent residency. Applicants must prove that they are at risk in Afghanistan because of their service to the U.S. government and provide a letter of recommendation from a U.S. embassy or the U.S. Armed Forces. But there is an SIV backlog of over [77,000 applicants](#) who remain in Afghanistan.
- [U.S. Refugee Admissions Program \(USRAP\)](#): To enter the U.S. as a refugee, Afghans must be referred to USRAP individually by the United Nations or a U.S. Embassy (P-1) or by their U.S.-based employer (P-2). To be accepted as a refugee, the applicant must also have already escaped to a third country — often Pakistan or Turkey — without the assistance of the U.S. government. Very few Afghans referred under P-1 or P-2 can afford this relocation and even if they can, the process is [heavily backlogged](#) and the wait time to actually be resettled is several years.

A host of factors have fueled the inadequacy of these options for Afghans. For example, the U.S. [closed](#) its Embassy in Kabul, forcing applicants to travel to neighboring countries to complete their respective immigration applications. Most lack the resources to do so, and with one less Embassy sharing the workload, neighboring Embassies' backlogs are growing. All of these processes are also heavily backlogged. For processing humanitarian parole applications, USCIS

counted on a mere [44 adjudicators](#). USCIS has also conducted [alarmingly few refugee interviews](#) and refugee resettlement rates have lagged far behind targets set at the start of each fiscal year.

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