

**CHAIR**  
ASSEMBLYMEMBER JESSE GABRIEL

**VICE CHAIR**  
SENATOR SCOTT WIENER

**STATE CAPITOL**  
P.O. BOX 942849  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0045  
(916) 319-2045

**CONSULTANTS**  
JENNY BERG  
DAVID BOCARSLY

# California State Legislature



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August 31, 2021

Dear President Biden and Members of Congress,

On behalf of the California Legislative Jewish Caucus, we write with deep concern for Afghans who are forced from their homes or at risk of life-threatening reprisals from the Taliban. Many of us have parents or grandparents who escaped Nazi occupied Europe during or just before World War II, and who eventually found refuge and safety in America. If it were not for that, we would not be here today. This is a deeply personal issue for us.

The scenes from the Kabul airport are devastating and only scratch the surface of the current situation in Afghanistan. In recent days, we have heard harrowing reports of Taliban members going door-to-door to identify women, peacebuilders, journalists, lawyers and judges, former members of government, and human rights defenders. These individuals, as well as their colleagues and loved ones, face grave danger and require our immediate assistance.

Throughout the 20-year war in Afghanistan, the U.S. made sweeping promises and helped secure important gains in the realms of human rights and democracy in partnership with our brave Afghan allies. Our Afghan partners have been integral to the U.S. mission, and we have a moral responsibility to protect those at risk due to our withdrawal. The U.S. should work with bilateral and multilateral partners to ensure urgent evacuation remains possible up to and beyond the planned August 31 withdrawal deadline.

Time is of the essence. Markets are closed and people are sheltering in place as they await information about ways out of the country. Cell phone minutes, which are usually purchased on an ad-hoc basis, will soon run out for most Afghans, as will food rations and access to cash.

We respectfully request that President Biden urgently prioritize the following:

- Evacuate Afghan allies and at-risk populations to U.S. territory, including by expediting Special Immigrant Visas and refugee applications through the U.S. resettlement program. Particularly for women and their families who are targets, the path to protection, even under Priority 2 designation, is often inaccessible. Women leaders, former members of government, human rights defenders, activists, LGBTQ\* individuals, religious minorities, students, and recent graduates must also be prioritized in evacuation efforts.
- Surge adjudication and processing resources to ensure bureaucracy does not get in the way of evacuation efforts.

- Facilitate the humanitarian parole of Afghans into the U.S. using DHS parole authority, either at ports-of-entry or in advance, set the FY 2022 refugee admissions goal at 125,000, and designate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Afghans already in the U.S.
- Call for an emergency session of the UN Security Council and propose a strong civilian and atrocity protection/observer mandate. The Administration must work with international and bilateral partners to establish a security and humanitarian corridor to facilitate evacuation and delivery of humanitarian aid.

We respectfully urge all Members of Congress to:

- Issue congressional authority to the State Department (PRM) and Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to provide reception and placement assistance for Afghans paroled into the U.S.
- Allocate funding and resources for resettlement for those able to evacuate. The current levels are insufficient to meet the requirements of U.S. and regional refugee resettlement.
- Support and provide resources to women, youth, and other civil society and human rights members who choose to remain in Afghanistan.

The California Legislative Jewish Caucus stands ready to welcome Afghan refugees into our state and communities. Thank you for your attention to this urgent and important matter.

Sincerely,



**JESSE GABRIEL**  
Chair, California Legislative Jewish Caucus  
Member, 45<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



**SCOTT WIENER**  
Vice Chair, California Legislative Jewish Caucus  
Member, 11<sup>th</sup> Senate District



**BEN ALLEN**  
Member, 26<sup>th</sup> Senate District



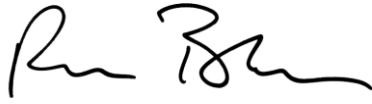
**REBECCA BAUER-KAHAN**  
Member, 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



**JOSH BECKER**  
Member, 13<sup>th</sup> Senate District



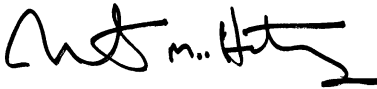
**MARC BERMAN**  
Member, 24<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



**RICHARD BLOOM**  
Member, 50<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



**LAURA FRIEDMAN**  
Member, 43<sup>rd</sup> Assembly District



**BOB HERTZBERG**  
Member, 18<sup>th</sup> Senate District



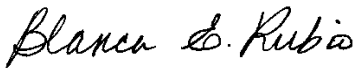
**MARC LEVINE**  
Member, 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



**JOSH NEWMAN**  
Member, 29<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



**ADRIN NAZARIAN**  
Member, 46<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



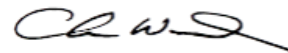
**BLANCA RUBIO**  
Member, 48<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



**SUSAN RUBIO**  
Member, 22<sup>nd</sup> Senate District



**HENRY STERN**  
Member, 27<sup>th</sup> Senate District



**CHRIS WARD**  
Member, 78<sup>th</sup> Assembly District