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**PRESS CONTACT**

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[hdessaulles@refugeerights.org](mailto:hdessaulles@refugeerights.org)**IRAP APPLAUDS INCLUSION OF 2,500 VISAS FOR AFGHAN ALLIES IN SPENDING BILL**

***FISHER: "Our Afghan partners have faced unacceptable delays due to congressional inaction, which can only endanger our troops and other U.S. Government personnel. This legislation fills the gap and provides safe passage for translators and other staff who face serious danger for their service."***

**New York, NY** – The [International Refugee Assistance Project](#) (IRAP) at the Urban Justice Center applauds the inclusion of 2,500 visas for Afghan allies in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017. After Congress failed to authorize sufficient visas in previous legislation, the SIV program stopped all applicant interviews in March 2017, leaving thousands of Afghan allies in limbo after their sacrifice to protect U.S. Government personnel in Afghanistan. The legislation released today, which approves spending through the end of fiscal year 2017, includes 2,500 visas for these mission-critical Afghan allies.

"Our Afghan partners have faced unacceptable delays due to congressional inaction, which can only endanger our troops and other U.S. Government personnel. This legislation fills the gap and provides safe passage for translators and other staff who face serious danger for their service," said **Betsy Fisher, Policy Director of IRAP**.

"Local allies are essential for the security of our soldiers, Marines, diplomats, and other U.S. Government personnel in Afghanistan," said **Mac McEachin, IRAP's National Security Policy Associate**. "The SIV program is a tactical necessity: it protects the allies who serve as our troops' eyes and ears on the ground."

Major congressional champions for wartime allies include Sens. John McCain (R-AZ), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Thom Tillis (R-NC), and Jack Reed (D-RI); and Reps. Adam Kinzinger (R-IL), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Seth Moulton (D-MA), Brad Wenstrup (R-OH) and Tim Ryan (D-OH). IRAP is also grateful to Veterans for American Ideals, Refugee Council USA, and Beena Patel and Joshua Andrews of FaegreBD Consulting for their powerful advocacy.

Safe Passage. New Beginnings.

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