



Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Program Under Threat Inclusion in House SFOPS a must

Background

Since the [Afghan Special Immigrant Visa \(SIV\) program](#) was established by Congress in 2009, it has authorized 58,000 visas to Afghans who risked their lives serving alongside U.S. troops and diplomats during our nation's longest war.¹ After the initial 5 year authorization, Congress has had to proactively provide additional visas each year to sustain the program.

Why the urgency?

All of the Afghans who worked on America's behalf now face reprisal from the Taliban. Since U.S. withdrawal, hundreds of SIV applicants and their families have been targeted by Taliban forces. This is why Congress has urged the U.S. Department of State to streamline and improve the processing of SIV applications while maintaining rigorous vetting standards. Since 2021, application processing has increased from 700 visas issued in an entire year to roughly 1,000 visas per month. As the State Dept continues to improve processing and devote the needed resources, this rate continues to increase.

In addition to limiting visas to eligible and deserving Afghans in the near term, not increasing the cap risks infrastructure improvements that Congress and AfghanEvac urged to better process SIV applicants. Since the withdrawal, the Administration has worked with partner nations to establish layover locations across the world to help continue to process Afghan allies and their families. If the visa numbers run out, it is likely that the resources devoted to processing SIVs and the efficiencies requested by AfghanEvac and Congress will contract. Restarting the program in the past has proven difficult.

Additionally, there are approximately 5,000 Afghans currently in the United States who the U.S. evacuated in 2021. A bill was introduced (the Afghan Adjustment Act) to ensure these Afghans have a pathway to legal permanent status, but it has stalled in Congress despite bipartisan and bicameral support.

Afghan SIV Process

After an applicant provides the documents required by law, their application is sent by the National Visa Center (NVC) to the Chief of Mission (COM) for approval. This is the stage where eligibility is determined. Historically, 37% of completed applications are approved by COM. Once an applicant has achieved COM approval, a visa denial is rare.

¹ 19,500 in the initial authorization and 38,500 since 2014

The applicant must then submit the required visa documentation (DS-260) for themselves and their family members. After undergoing rigorous security vetting and in compliance with all security standards, the applicant and their family are eligible to schedule a visa interview. Following the interview and medical check, if their visa is approved, they can relocate to the United States where, upon arrival, they become Lawful Permanent Residents.

What do we need

20,000 COM-approved applicants are awaiting visa interviews overseas and 5,000 allies are here in the U.S. However, there are only 7,000 Congressionally-authorized visas remaining in the program. **Congress must add at least 20,000 visas this year**, with a plan to add additional numbers in subsequent fiscal years until the program can be responsibly closed and the promise to our allies kept. In addition to the 20,000 COM-approved applicants, the State Department reports that there are 60,000 applicants awaiting COM approval, where the approval rate is historically 37 percent. Additional applicants are still in the initial stages of the process.

For fiscal year (FY) 2024, the Senate State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill increased to the cap by 20,000. The House version did not provide any additional visas. We need all Members of Cto advocate for the inclusion of at least 20,000 in the final FY 2024 appropriations bills. All Members who stand by our veterans and our wartime allies must convey their support for 20,000 visas to House Speaker **Mike Johnson, Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries**, House Judiciary Committee Chairman **Jim Jordan**, Ranking Member **Jerry Nadler**, House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman **Kay Granger**, and Ranking Member **Rosa DeLauro**.

This is not a hard sell for the American public. In fact, **more [than 89% of Americans](#) support standing by our Afghan allies, [including 75% of President Trump's](#) supporters.**

By the Numbers

Total SIVs remaining	7,000
SIVs in Pipeline	
Partial applications	70,000
Awaiting COM review	60,000
COM Approved	20,000
In US, awaiting Status	5,000



SIV Application Vetting & Approval Process

For official instructions visit: <https://travel.state.gov/afghan>

