

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 26, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairman Leahy, and Vice Chairman Shelby,

We write to urge your immediate consideration of a robust supplemental to support the National Guard, U.S. Capitol Police (USCP), repairs to the Capitol Complex, and funding to ensure Afghan interpreters and their families who long supported U.S. force in Afghanistan can come to safety.

Following the January 6th insurrection, National Guard units from around the country deployed to Washington, D.C., to protect our democratic institutions and ensure a peaceful transition of power. This mission, historic and important, cost an estimated \$521 million and used funds appropriated for Federal training and missions. If the funding is not provided by August 1, 2021, the National Guard will be forced to cancel summer drill and training, among other important initiatives. These cancellations will have a detrimental effect on our military readiness – the Guard is used continuously today in support of domestic and overseas operations and cannot afford such a gap – as well as our emergency preparedness and response capabilities in the midst of hurricane and fire seasons and other natural disasters. These cancellations will also negatively affect the financial wellness of our servicemembers.

In addition to funding for the National Guard, the supplemental funding package must provide the Department of Defense (DoD) with critical funding needed to continue cover the ongoing cost for COVID-19 mission and effects on servicemembers. Servicemembers and their families face a military healthcare shortfall, and Congress must include funding to ensure their health demands are met in any supplemental appropriations legislation. This is also a readiness issue and must be addressed immediately.

The DoD has provided a list of projects it will submit for reprogramming if funding for the National Guard is not provided emergency funding. While DoD leadership has indicated that these projects are low-priority, low-risk projects, this is not the case. Included on this list are repairs to an airfield critical to the training and deployment of 75th Ranger Regiment and Army

Airborne School, refit construction for our modern nuclear submarine fleet, cyber schoolhouse modernization, and barracks improvements for soldiers and cadets. These projects are urgently necessary and cannot become obscured or delayed in an avoidable reprogramming. Reprogramming should not be a remedy the failure of Congress to meet its obligations to fund the budgetary shortfalls that the National Guard faces. The proposed reprogramming also would create a half billion dollar gap in facility maintenance and will only exacerbate the existing backlog creating ripple effects and delays to projects across the country. Finally, the reprogramming would not solve the funding issues and equipment costs gaps faced by the USCP because of the January 6th insurrection. The Senate has an obligation to ensure that both the National Guard and USCP have the resources and support they need to fulfill their missions; reprogramming is an unsustainable half-measure to support the National Guard and completely ignores the needs of the USCP.

Similar to the National Guard, USCP is also facing an upcoming funding cliff. We cannot only provide the necessary funding to cover the unanticipated costs and overtime associated with the heroic response of USCP during the events of and after the insurrection. We also have a duty to ensure USCP officers are safe now and in the future, have the equipment, training, and support they need to meet tomorrow's challenges and support their mental health. Beyond the specific needs of USCP, we must strengthen the physical structure – the home of our democracy. Funding for the Architect of the Capitol is important to ensure that the Capitol building and grounds are hardened while also ensuring the transparency and openness of the People's House. We also support funding for the U.S. Capitol Protection Task Force necessary to plan and coordinate future rapid response in a way that prevents anything like January 6th from happening again.

Finally, on July 12, 2021, General Austin "Scott" Miller relinquished command in Afghanistan, a symbolic end to the twenty-year military engagement there. We support this decision by President Biden – however, our responsibility did not end there. The United States has a moral duty to protect those Afghans and their families who protected American forces as interpreters, aided the U.S. mission, and put their lives at risk. We support expanding the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program and making the process more efficient and effective. We also encourage you to include language requiring the Department of State and DoD to develop an alternative means of employment verification for SIV applicants when a human resources letter cannot be obtained. This could include a combination of affidavits from U.S. servicemembers who served with the interpreters, additional biographic information, and other evidence of employment with the U.S. military. We also support an additional \$100 million to support Afghan refugees who are predicted to flee their homes as the Taliban reclaims territory. Support for our Afghan partners in the SIV program has long been a bipartisan issue. Their service shows their long-standing commitment to a just and equitable Afghanistan and we must honor our commitments. We cannot abandon those who will inevitably face violence in the absence of U.S. military presence because of their support to our efforts.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issues. We owe the National Guard, servicemembers and their families, U.S. Capitol Police, our Afghan partners and their families all due consideration to ensure their service and sacrifice is not forsaken.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Raphael Warnock in blue ink, consisting of stylized initials 'R. Warnock' followed by a flourish.

Raphael Warnock
U.S. Senator

Handwritten signature of Tammy Duckworth in blue ink, written in a cursive style.

Tammy Duckworth
U.S. Senator

Handwritten signature of Kirsten Gillibrand in blue ink, written in a cursive style.

Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator