

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 22

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 156

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 22—Relative to the federal Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 27, 2013.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 22, Gorell. The federal Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009.

This measure would call upon the United States Congress and the President's administration to expedite actions at the United States Department of State to process the visa applications of Afghan allies who have been identified and vetted by the United States military or other agencies as having risked their lives by supporting and working for United States troops overseas, and to expand the number of visas offered to our Afghan allies.

WHEREAS, Thousands of Californians served in uniform in the war in Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, Countless local Afghan nationals provided trusted and life-saving support to Americans and their allies in Afghanistan as interpreters, advisers, liaisons, and other functionaries; and

WHEREAS, More than 8,000 Afghani interpreters worked for the United States during the conflict, risking the lives of their families and themselves to assist American troops and the United States government; and

WHEREAS, It was recently pointed out in the New York Times that with United States Armed Forces currently withdrawing from Afghanistan, many of the local nationals who provided support to American forces are now the target of Taliban and other insurgent attacks. In February 2013, two interpreters were gunned down in Logar Province, south of Kabul, Afghanistan. In December 2012, an interpreter working in Jalalabad was singled out while heading home on leave, and Taliban assailants killed his two brothers in the attack; and

WHEREAS, The United Nations has reported that casualties resulting from targeted killings of civilians by antigovernment elements increased by 53 percent in the first six months of 2012, in comparison to the corresponding period in 2011; and

WHEREAS, The federal Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 authorizes the issuance of up to 1,500 special immigrant visas (SIVs) annually through the 2013 fiscal year to Afghan nationals who have worked for or on behalf of the United States Government in Afghanistan and who find their lives in danger as a consequence of their employment; and

WHEREAS, Although 7,500 SIVs were intended to be issued by the federal Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009, only about 1,000 have been issued to date, and as of last fall, there was a backlog of more than 5,000 applicants waiting to begin the process. This delay further risks the lives of important, dedicated allies who have already risked their lives in the call of duty to our soldiers and our country; and

WHEREAS, There are significant differences between the visa programs created for Iraq and Afghanistan. While the Iraq program allowed for up to 25,000 visas, the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 only makes 7,500 visas available. Additionally, the Afghan visa program limits family members to only a spouse and dependent children under 21 years of age, while the Iraq program allowed for parents, siblings, and all children; and

WHEREAS, The Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 presents the opportunity to save the lives of Afghans who saved the lives of Americans and to maintain our commitment to these important allies who are in harm's way; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature calls upon the United States Congress and the President's administration to expedite actions at the United States Department of State to process the visa applications of our Afghan allies who have been identified and vetted by the United States military or other agencies as having risked their lives by supporting and working for United States troops overseas, and to expand the number of visas offered to our Afghan allies; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Leader of the United States House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Senate, the Minority Leader of the Senate, and each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States.