

Voices: A call for passage of Afghan Adjustment Act

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I am the 67-year-old pastor of Stadium Drive Baptist Church in Fort Worth, and I also serve as a senior professor of missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. I am concerned for thousands of Afghans who were given only temporary status in the United States after helping us during the Afghan war.

The [Afghan Adjustment Act](#), which would put the Afghans on a path to permanent resident status after additional security vetting, was introduced first in August 2022 by a bipartisan group of U.S. senators and representatives, but the bill did not pass. The bill has been reintroduced this year in both houses of Congress.

Last month, five Republican and five Democratic senators collaborated to reintroduce this important bill, while a companion bill was introduced with bipartisan support in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Broad support for Afghan refugees

A [press release](#) from the bill's Senate sponsors states, "The legislation has received the endorsement of many groups, including the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Blue Star Families, and more."

I am concerned particularly for the large number of Afghan children who only have temporary status. The Evacuate Our Allies coalition [notes](#), "Following the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan after 2 decades, over 130,000 Afghans were evacuated of whom 44 percent are children."

[Evacuate Our Allies](#) is “a coalition of trusted human rights, religious, and refugee organizations working alongside veterans and frontline civilians to relocate, welcome, and support the resettlement of as many at-risk Afghans as possible.”

This coalition includes World Relief, the Christian humanitarian organization that employs my son and daughter-in-law.

Importance of ministry to Afghan refugees

The Joshua Project website explains only 0.01 percent of the population in Afghanistan is evangelical Christian. It adds that the evangelical annual growth rate is zero percent.

As a former International Mission Board missionary and missions professor, I am familiar with the difficulties Christians have faced in Afghanistan. Cyd Mizell is listed on our Martyr’s Walk at Southwestern Seminary.

Mizell was kidnapped by gunmen in Kandahar in 2008 and is presumed dead. She was a Southwestern graduate and a fluent Pashtu speaker. She taught Afghan women job skills that would generate income for them. Her death was tragic, but we should learn from her sacrificial work there.

Certainly, we can see the opportunity to minister lovingly to the Afghans in the United States, share the plan of salvation with them, see some of them become Christians, and help them communicate the gospel message to their contacts in Afghanistan when possible.

Bipartisan support of Afghan refugees

The bipartisan nature of the support for the Afghan Adjustment Act is quite refreshing. I understand the strong feelings on both sides of the aisle concerning contentious issues. The vitriol often displayed, however, is not productive.

Hopefully the bipartisanship displayed concerning the Afghan Adjustment Act bodes well for its passage. I hope it will be only a first step, as Congress could show similar bipartisanship in providing permanent legal status for other immigrant groups who currently have only temporary legal protections, such as the “Dreamers” under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

Speak up for Afghan refugees

One way we can demonstrate our love in these situations—giving credibility to our proclamation of the gospel message—is by being stewards of the influence with which God has entrusted us by speaking up.

As a pastor, I do not endorse political candidates from the pulpit, but I do discuss political issues that also are spiritual issues. If the people at our church understand the issues that are both political and spiritual, they will know whom to vote for without my endorsement.

They also may be motivated to contact current political office holders with their concerns. [Contacts with their senators and representatives concerning the Afghan Adjustment Act](#) could make the difference in whether the bill passes or does not. Please do whatever the Lord leads you to do.

‘Let’s make our voices heard’

An Evacuate Our Allies [factsheet](#) on the Afghan Adjustment Act gives the following summary of the difficult situation: “The current affirmative asylum backlog is more than 400,000 cases with a broader immigration backlog of 1.4 million cases. Further, many of these Afghans arrived with little more than the clothes on their backs.

“Many were forced to destroy important documentation in order to avoid Taliban violence while waiting to be evacuated. Many more had important documentation destroyed by the U.S. Embassy in Kabul as the city fell.

“Such complications could make asylum claims more difficult and increase the likelihood that Afghan parolees will end up in already-overwhelmed immigration courts. ... Congress must act now to pass an Afghan Adjustment Act.”

Unfortunately, some Christians have demonized all immigrants. Legitimate security concerns should be addressed, of course. Most immigrants, however, are desperate human beings who need our help.

We must not succumb to compassion fatigue or make the mistake of putting all immigrants into one category. Politicians tend to listen to voters. Let’s make our voices heard.

Mike Morris is the pastor of Stadium Drive Baptist Church in Fort Worth and a professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The views expressed are those of the author.