Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 17, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to express our support for the Administration's announcement on February 1st that the United States will complete combat operations in Afghanistan by the end of next year.

From information reported in the media, the U.S. intends to transition from major combat operations in Afghanistan to a "training, advice and assist role" by the middle-to-latter part of 2013. We applaud this announcement by Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta to accelerate the transition away from combat operations, and it provides assurance that the timeframe outlined in your 2009 West Point and 2010 NATO speeches will be carried out. As you know, many of us support an even more rapid withdrawal of all our troops from Afghanistan.

The majority of Americans want a safe and orderly military withdrawal from Afghanistan as quickly as possible, as recent public opinion polls indicate. The desire by the American people for an accelerated transition in Afghanistan was reflected in votes taken in Congress last year, in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate during their respective debates on amendments offered by Representatives McGovern and Jones and by Senator Merkley to the FY 2012 National Defense Authorization Act. These votes show there is strong bipartisan political support to take bold steps regarding U.S. policy in Afghanistan.

The past 10 years have cost America dearly in the blood and sacrifice of our military servicemen and women and their families, and in our nation's fiscal health and security. The United States intervened in Afghanistan to destroy al Qaeda's safe haven, remove the Taliban government that sheltered al Qaeda, and pursue those who planned the September 11th attacks on the United States; those objectives have largely been met and no longer require a large presence of combat troops in Afghanistan. While questions remain about the details of the announced transition – when and how quickly U.S. troops will be coming home, the number and purpose of troops that might remain in Afghanistan and for how long a period, the costs and the savings of accelerating the completion of combat operations – the February 1st announcement clearly signals that now is the moment to initiate the transition, end the war in Afghanistan and bring our troops home.

Sincerely,

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress

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Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

John J. Duncan, Jr.
Member of Congress

John Garamendi
Member of Congress

Justin Amash
Member of Congress

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Timothy V. Johnson
Member of Congress

George Miller
Member of Congress

John Lewis
Member of Congress

John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress

Janice Hahn
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Sam Farr
Member of Congress

Gary C. Peters
Member of Congress

Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress

Lynn C. Woolsey
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

Lois Capps
Member of Congress

Henry A. Waxman
Member of Congress

Bruce L. Braley
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Luján
Member of Congress

Martin Heinrich
Member of Congress

Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Fortney "Pete" Stark
Member of Congress

Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

Bob Filner
Member of Congress

Barney Frank
Member of Congress

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Edolphus Towns
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

Charles A. Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Jim McDermott
Member of Congress

Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Jared Polis
Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress

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Mike Quigley
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Member of Congress

Dennis J. Kucinich
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Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress

Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress

Humane Cable

Signatures on Page 8:

Roscoe G. Bartlett (MD)
Howard Coble (NC)
Ed Whitfield (KY)
Dana Rohrabacher (CA)
Jo Ann Emerson (MO)