

**Floor Statement of  
Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY) on the  
Afghan Freedom and Security Support Act  
June 6, 2007**

Mr. Chairman, I thank Chairman Lantos for his leadership on this important bill and in so many other areas; and I rise in strong support of the Afghan Freedom and Security Support Act.

The bill includes provisions from legislation that I introduced earlier this year, H.R. 937, the Afghan Women Empowerment Act, which targets critical assistance to Afghan women and girls. The bill authorizes \$45 million each year from fiscal year 2008 through fiscal year 2010 for programs in Afghanistan that benefit women and girls, as well as the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs.

The funding would be directed toward important needs, including medical care, education, vocational training, protection from violence and civil participation.

In 2003, I successfully attached, with the leadership and help of Chairman Lantos, an amendment to the fiscal year 2004 emergency supplemental bill that provided \$60 million in funding for Afghan women and girls NGOs, including \$5 million for the creation of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission.

During the past several years, the U.S. has invested in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan, both because it is the right thing to do and because it is also critical to our national security. However, like many of my colleagues, I am troubled by the challenges facing Afghani women.

In March, I had the pleasure and on other occasions of meeting with Dr. Sima Samar, head of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. She says Afghan women are losing ground. Many women continue to endure hardships including targeted violence, limited mobility, and a high rate of maternal mortality.

I am also deeply concerned about reports that girls schools continue to be targeted for violence, including dozens in this past year. Clearly, we have a great deal of more work to do. And by giving women access to the skills and opportunities that they need, they will become partners in creating Afghanistan's future and we will ensure that women will no longer be second class citizens.

I deeply thank Chairman Lantos and Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen for their leadership in getting this important bill to the floor, and I also want to acknowledge Congress Member Abercrombie for his strong support for this legislation and his efforts on its behalf, along with the Feminist Majority, led by Ellie Smeal.

This legislation is another critical step in helping Afghan women, and I commend the House for passing this legislation today.