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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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RANKING MEMBER
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SPENDING

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE
WORKFORCE

March 15, 2011

Dear Colleague:

Today, many of us are hearing from General Petraeus that “significant” progress is being made in Afghanistan. We have heard it before. Military and civilian leaders have, for years, told lawmakers and the public that they were making “progress” in Afghanistan. For instance:

In a speech to a joint session of Congress in 2004, President Karzai said, “You [Americans] came to Afghanistan to defeat terrorism, and we Afghans welcomed and embraced you for the liberation of our country. ... This road, this journey is one of success and victory.”

In a joint press conference with President Karzai after that speech, President Bush said, “Today we witness the rebirth of a vibrant Afghan culture. Music fills the marketplaces and people are free to come together to celebrate in open. ... Years of war and tyranny have eroded Afghanistan's economy and infrastructure, yet a revival is under way.”

At another joint press conference with President Karzai in March of 2006, President Bush said, “We are impressed by the progress that your country is making, Mr. President [Karzai], a lot of it has to do with your leadership.”

In February of 2007, Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry told National Public Radio that Afghanistan was “on the steady path, right now ... to, I believe, success.”

In April 2008, President Bush told news reporters, “I think we’re making good progress in Afghanistan.”

October 2008, General McKiernan, Commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, told the press “We are not losing in Afghanistan.” In May 2009, he was replaced by General McChrystal.

October 2008, President Bush said Afghanistan is “a situation where there’s been progress and there are difficulties.”

November 2009, President Obama, visiting troops in Afghanistan, reportedly said, “Because of the progress we’re making, we look forward to a new phase next year, the beginning of the transition to Afghan responsibility.”

December 2009, General Stanley McChrystal, the top commander, predicted that the US troop buildup in Afghanistan will make "significant progress" in turning back the Taliban and securing the country by the coming summer. "By next summer I expect there to be significant progress that is evident to us," McChrystal said in congressional testimony.

In January 2010, General McChrystal was asked by Diane Sawyer, "Have you turned the tide?" McChrystal answered, "I believe we are doing that now."

In May 2010, General McChrystal told Congress that he saw "progress" in Afghanistan.

In May 2010, President Obama told the press that "we've begun to reverse the momentum" in Afghanistan.

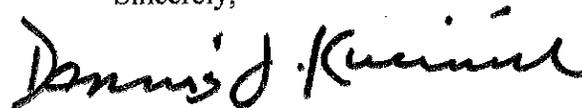
In June 2010, Secretary Gates told a Congressional committee that we are "making headway" in Afghanistan. In June 2010, General McChrystal was replaced by General Petraeus.

In August 2010, General Petraeus said, "there's progress being made" in Afghanistan.

In February 2011, General Petraeus said, "We have achieved what we set out to achieve in 2010" which was to reverse the insurgency momentum, solidify our accomplishments, and build on successes. "We took away safe havens and the infrastructure that goes with it."

The President has requested another \$113.4 billion to continue the war in Afghanistan in FY12. That sum will be on top of \$454.7 billion already spent (and borrowed) on the war to date. On Thursday, March 17, 2011, Congress will have the opportunity to consider whether all of this "progress" has been worth the money. It is time for Congress to exercise fiscal responsibility and to assume its Constitutional responsibilities and end the war in Afghanistan. Vote YES on H. Con. Res 28 and direct the President to end this war by the end of the year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis J. Kucinich". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress