

December 1, 2009

Washington, DC – Rep. Ben Ray Luján released the following statement on President Barack Obama's Afghanistan speech.

*"I share the administration's goals of disrupting and defeating Al Qaeda and keeping our country safe, and I am encouraged that President Obama outlined his clear strategy. However, I remain concerned about committing more troops to Afghanistan.*

*In August, I traveled to Afghanistan and met with several U.S. and Afghan officials to discuss how the United States can successfully bring the war to an end and help the people of Afghanistan. Based on these discussions, it is clear that the people of Afghanistan must come together to take responsibility for their country by strengthening Afghan forces and police and addressing corruption in government. Furthermore, there must be an emphasis and commitment to humanitarian and diplomatic efforts as we cannot lose sight of the importance of human rights, including women's rights, in Afghanistan.*

*While I am concerned about troop increases, I will continue to support the men and women of our Armed Forces. And I thank them for their service."*

In September, Rep. Luján and 57 of his colleagues sent a letter President Obama urging him to reject a troop increase.

In August, Rep. Luján visited Afghanistan, speaking with officials including General Stanley McChrystal, the commander of U.S. Forces Afghanistan and NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Afghan President Hamid Karzai, and Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, a United State diplomat to Afghanistan.

In June, Rep. Luján voted in favor of an amendment that would have required the Secretary of Defense to provide Congress, by the end of the year, with an outline of its exit strategy for U.S. military operations in Afghanistan. The amendment was considered as part of the FY 2010 National Defense Authorizations Act (H.R. 2647). The amendment failed by a vote of 138 to 278. There was a similar standalone bill introduced earlier by Rep. James McGovern (D-MA), HR 2402, which Rep. Luján cosponsored.