

For Immediate Release: October 27, 2009

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Chairman Tierney Comments on Release of the Asia Foundation's 2009 Afghan Public Opinion Survey

Washington, D.C. – Today, Congressman John F. Tierney (D-MA), Chairman of the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, noticed a subcommittee briefing availability concerning a newly-released Asia Foundation public opinion survey entitled, “Afghanistan in 2009: A Survey of the Afghan People.”

The survey was conducted in June and July of this year in all 34 provinces just prior to the controversial Afghan Presidential election held in August. It is the fifth Asia Foundation survey to measure Afghan public perception and attitudes towards security, the economy, democratic values, women, and society.

“When it comes to Afghanistan, it’s not often we hear from Afghans themselves. At the end of the day, Afghans must – and will – determine their own destiny. Foreigners, no matter how well-intentioned, will only breed contempt if they substitute their judgment for the Afghan people.

Nation-building must come from within a country's sovereign borders. In other words, nation-building begins at home.

“President Karzai and candidate Abdullah Abdullah have both expressed a strong willingness to negotiate a political end to the ongoing armed conflict. The latest survey data from The Asia Foundation shows that the majority of Afghans – 7 out of 10 – support an end to the current hostilities through national negotiation and reconciliation. The Taliban would be wise to join in a political solution now. A protracted war of Afghan against Afghan serves no one, and only furthers the tragic cycle of poverty, illiteracy, poor health, and corruption.

“It is a shame that the integrity of latest electoral process was compromised. Data from The Asia Foundation's 2009 Afghan Survey show that, right before the elections, nearly 70% believed that voting can lead to improvements -- reversing earlier downward trends. Those aspirations were undoubtedly challenged by the first round of a fundamentally flawed Presidential election.”

The briefing will allow subcommittee members and staff to hear the Asia Foundation's presentation on the survey data and determine to what extent it may be useful for informing policy in the area.

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