



# Arizona House of Representatives

1700 West Washington, Suite H • Phoenix, AZ 85007-2844  
Phone: (602) 926-5836 • FAX: (602) 417-3125

## *Representative Jennifer J. Burns* *Press Release*

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Rising Afghan Political Leaders Visit Phoenix Area

Delegates Study U.S. Political System, Discuss Bi-lateral, Regional & International Issues

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PHOENIX, February 26, 2008 – On Wednesday, February 27, 2008, a distinguished delegation of seven young political and policy leaders from Afghanistan will arrive in Phoenix as part of a twelve day political exchange program organized by [The American Council of Young Political Leaders \(ACYPL\)](#). This is the first ACYPL delegation to come from Afghanistan to the United States and will include individuals on the front lines of reforming the Afghan government and civil society such as members of Afghan Provincial Councils, National Assembly staff members, and international relief and development experts. *[Delegate list and biographies attached.]*

The exchange program is designed to promote mutual understanding and expose the delegates to the American political system at all levels – national, state, and local. It will also provide them with a unique perspective on American culture; foster dialogue on international and regional issues; and provide the delegates with the knowledge, tools, and professional contacts that will assist them in the future.

While in Arizona, the delegation will meet with Arizona Governor **Janet Napolitano**, Supreme Court Chief Justice **Ruth McGregor**, Senate President **Tim Bee**, House Speaker **Jim Weiers**, ACYPL Alumni Legislators, and Afghan-Americans living in Phoenix. They will visit Thunderbird School of Global Management to meet with President **Angel Cabrera**; learn about “Project Artemis,” a business training program for Afghan women entrepreneurs; and have a roundtable discussion with Thunderbird students and alumni on Economic and Infrastructure Development in Afghanistan.

The Afghan delegation will also have the opportunity to meet **Sally Ride**, former NASA Astronaut, and **Barbara Barrett**, Chair of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy at the U.S. Department of State and a member of the U.S. – Afghan Women’s Council. In addition, the University of Arizona will provide an educational briefing on farming and agriculture in arid climates, and Arizona State University and the Central Arizona Project will discuss water infrastructure planning at the Decision Theater. Other opportunities include meeting with the Consular Corps of Arizona and a variety of other educational and cultural experiences.

During their stay in Arizona, the delegation will be hosted by Arizona State Representative **Jennifer J. Burns** (R-Picture Rocks), a 2006 delegate to South Africa. “It has been my immense honor to prepare a series of meetings which will foster discussion on issues facing both countries, while providing substantive and relevant information they can take back as they work to reform the Afghan government and civil society.”

The delegates kicked off their program with meetings and briefings in Washington, D.C. and will conclude in Chicago, Illinois, before returning to Afghanistan. Arizona is honored to extend a warm welcome to this delegation during their stay in our state.

Founded in 1966, ACYPL is a bi-partisan, not-for-profit international exchange organization dedicated to fostering lasting political, economic, and cultural relations between the next generation of political leaders in the United States and their counterparts around the world. ACYPL has been recognized worldwide as the pre-eminent catalyst for introducing rising political leaders and policy makers to international affairs and to each other. Alumni of ACYPL exchanges include 38 sitting members of Congress, 6 sitting Governors, 1 sitting Cabinet member, 7 U.S. Ambassadors, as well as former Prime Ministers of Japan and Hungary, the Foreign Minister of Taiwan, the Speaker of the Japanese Diet, the Russian Minister for Chechnya, and parliamentarians around the globe.

(This program is made possible by a grant from the U.S. Department of State, and support from corporations and individuals. Arizona sponsors include Cox Communications; Stan Barnes, Copperstate Consulting, ACYPL Alumnus; Wendy Briggs, Veridus Consulting; Jason LeVecke; Larry Lucero, Tucson Electric Power.)

#### CONTACT

Barrett Marson, *Arizona House Majority Press Secretary*, 602-926-3233 [bmarson@azleg.gov](mailto:bmarson@azleg.gov)

Mike Garretson, *ACYPL Communications Coordinator*, 202-857-0999x27, [mgarretson@acypl.org](mailto:mgarretson@acypl.org)

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**Political Study Tour of the United States**  
**(Washington DC; Phoenix, AZ; Chicago, IL)**

*Program Arranged By:* American Council of Young Political Leaders  
*Program Contact:* Kristin Rhebergen, Program Officer (202) 857-0999 ext. 17  
*Department of State Contact:* Ms. Shalita Jones, Office of Citizen Exchanges (202) 203-7507

**ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN**  
**TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**FEBRUARY 23 – MARCH 4, 2008**

**DELEGATE LIST**

Mr. Mohammad Ibrahim AMAN	Special Assistant to the Speaker House of the People (National Assembly)
Ms. Anita ASKARYAR	UNHCR Capacity Development Advisor Protection Department, Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation & Development
Mr. Abdullh AHMADZI	Member and Assistant to the President Logar Provincial Council
Ms. Nabilla HAIDARY	Staff Member, Committee of Women's Affairs, Human Rights and Civil Society House of the People (National Assembly)
Mr. Qari Dowlat MOHAMMAD	Member Badghis Provincial Council
Mr. Abdul QAHAR	Office Manager Global Partners (Ghor Province)
Mr. Rahmatullah RASHADI	President Nuristan Provincial Council

**OBSERVER**

Ms. Shalita JONES  
Program Officer  
Youth Programs Division, Bureau of Educational  
and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State

**ACYPL ESCORT**

Ms. Kristin RHEBERGEN

**INTERPRETERS**

Mr. Latif INSAF  
Mr. Daud AYAZI  
Mr. Wais AHMAD



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**DELEGATE BIOGRAPHIES**

**Mr. Mohammad Ibrahim AMAN**  
**Special Assistant to the Speaker**  
**House of the People (National Assembly)**

Mr. Mohammad Ibrahim Aman is a special assistant to the Speaker of the House of the People, Mohammed Younis Qanooni. A trusted aide, Mr. Aman assists Speaker Qanooni in the day to day work of running the lower house of parliament.. The House of the People, the *Jaargah Mardumi*, has primary responsibility for making and ratifying laws and approving the actions of the president. Previously, Mr. Aman was a secretary to Afghanistan's Minister of Education.

**Ms. Anita ASKARYAR**  
**UNHCR Capacity Development Advisor, Protection Department**  
**Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (Kabul)**

Ms. Anita Askaryar is a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Capacity Development Advisor for the Protection Department within the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in Kabul. She has served in this capacity since 2006, and from 2004 until 2005. Ms. Askaryar also served as an UNHCR Secretary/Executive Advisor. She graduated with a bachelor's degree from Kabul University in 2007.

**Mr. Abdullh AHMADZI**  
**Member and Secretary, Logar Provincial Council**

Mr. Abdullh Ahmadzi is the youngest member and secretary of the Logar Provincial Council which he has run since its inception two years ago. As secretary of the council, Mr. Ahmadzi enjoys influence over other council members and their constituencies. As a member of the council, he worked closely with the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) on tribal issues and other projects, and was a key player in drafting the province's Provincial Development Plan (PDP). Logar Province is south east of Kabul, in the central zone of the country. Previously, Mr. Ahmadzi was a Provincial Education Trainer with the Coordination for Afghan Relief, an Educational Evaluator with Mercy Corps, and a teacher/headmaster at the Save the Children School in Balochistan, Pakistan.

**Ms. Nabilla HAIDARY**  
**Staff Member, Committee of Women's Affairs, Human Rights and Civil Society**  
**House of the People (National Assembly)**

Ms. Nabilla Haidary is a staff member for the Committee of Women's Affairs, Human Rights and Civil Society within the House of the People in the National Assembly. Ms. Haidary is a key leader among a very small group of women working in the Afghan parliament and is an expert on women's issues in Afghanistan. She graduated with a degree in social sciences from Kabul University in 2004.

**Mr. Qari Dowlat MOHAMMAD**  
**Member, Badghis Provincial Council**

Mr. Qari Dowlat Mohammad is the youngest member of the Badghis Provincial Council, where he represents the district of Ghormach. Although from a historically conservative province, Mr. Mohammad has served as an open minded intermediary between the Pashtun community and the government. He has been instrumental in initiating the construction of a school in his home village, an impressive feat in a district in which anti-government elements have closed nearly every school.

Previously, he served as the Ghormach District Director of Haj and Endowment. As such, he worked to raise awareness among pious and religious citizens in Afghanistan, and some of his duties included sending Afghan Haji (pilgrims) to Saudi Arabia; providing Islamic teaching for the youth; coordinating cultural and publicity affairs; and convening religious meetings and ceremonies.

**Mr. Abdul QAHAR**  
**Office Manager, Global Partners Central Asia (Ghor Province)**

Mr. Abdul Qahar is the office manager for Global Partners (GP) in the Ghor Province of Afghanistan. Global Partners is an international relief and development organization based in the United Kingdom, with a regional field entity in Central Asia and branch offices in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Tajikistan. GP is involved with humanitarian projects advancing education and relieving poverty. Currently in Ghor Province, GP is running an English language and computer center in which over a hundred students have been taught English and nearly 30 computer skills.

Mr. Qahar previously worked as a translator for the United Nations Mission to Afghanistan and as an elections facilitator for the United Nations Office for Project Services. He also worked on the national and provincial elections.

**Mr. Rahmatullah RASHADI**  
**Leader, Nuristan Provincial Council**

Mr. Rahmatullah Rashadi was elected as Leader of the Nuristan Provincial Council in 2005. Nuristan Province, located in the north east of the country and bordering on Pakistan, is a rugged, mountainous region. As a result, Nuristan is one of the least developed regions in Afghanistan, and faces shortages of hospitals and schools. Previously, Mr. Rashadi was a school teacher in Attati Village within the province. He is a graduate of Medina University in Saudi Arabia.

## **OBSERVER**

**Ms. Shalita JONES**

**Program Officer, Youth Programs Division, Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs  
U.S. Department of State**

Ms. Shalita Jones serves as program officer in the Youth Programs Division of the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of Citizen Exchanges. She manages several international student and political exchange programs that focus on a wide range of themes including academics, cultural enrichment, and international policy/public diplomacy. Ms. Jones works with and acts as liaison to private exchange organizations throughout the U.S. (and their partners abroad) developing program ideas that support the Department's Strategic Goals, particularly mutual understanding and democracy building, and coordinating projects among U.S. Embassies, the Bureau and exchange organizations to assure they meet Department and country priorities and they are mutually complimentary and beneficial to the priorities of the grantee organizations. Prior to her current position Ms. Jones served as the Bureau's liaison for the International Visitors Program (IV) to affiliates of the National Council for International Visitors (NCIV), and provided support and assistance to NCIV community organizations and other local sponsors in cities throughout the U.S. to ensure high quality programming for International Visitors worldwide. Ms. Jones holds a BA in Communications with a double minor in Political Science/International Studies from Trinity College, Washington, DC.

## **ARIZONA HOSTS**

**Rep. Jennifer J. BURNS**

**State Representative, District 25**

Representative Jennifer J. Burns is currently serving her third term as an Arizona State Representative. In the Arizona House she serves as Chairman of the Committee on Higher Education and is a member of the Committees on Health and Water and Agriculture. Representative Burns completed a legal internship with Senator Jon Kyl and the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee and an undergraduate internship on the Arizona State Senate Health, Welfare and Aging Committee. She also served as a legal clerk with the Yuma County Attorney's office and the Oro Valley Town Attorney's office. Representative Burns received a B.A. in Political Science, a B.S in Chemistry, a Masters of Public Administration in Health Policy, and a J.D. from the University of Arizona.

**Mr. M. Yasin Khosti**

**World Affairs Council of Arizona, Board of Directors**

Mr. M. Yasin Khosti was born in Afghanistan and came to the U.S. in 1963 when he studied at the Ohio State University and received his B.Sc. in Geodetic Science. He also has a Masters Degree in Organizational Management from the University of Phoenix. He has lived in Arizona since 1983 and has been active with the Afghan-American community. Yasin's professional duties included working for the Government of Afghanistan with the Ministry of Mines and Industries and the Ministry of Public Health; UNICEF, Hoechst Pharmaceuticals, and Bristol-Myers Squibb. He is currently on the Boards of Directors with the World Affairs Council of Arizona and the Society of Afghan Engineers of America. He worked for the reconstruction of Afghanistan from 2002 through 2005. During these four years he helped establish a new independent government office (Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority) AACA to monitor, evaluate, and coordinate the international assistance for Afghanistan. Yasin also served as Senior Advisor with the United Nations to the

Minister of Public Works and the Minister of Transport. He has recently accepted a position as Assistant Professor at the Western International University

**Ms. Vernita Khosti**

Ms. Vernita Khosti moved to Afghanistan from Ohio in 1967 and lived there through 1976 with her husband, Yasin, and two children. For over nine of these ten years she worked in the Ministry of Education. After moving back to the U.S. in 1976, she worked in the offices of several educational and health institutions. She also owned and operated a gift shop for several years. She and her family have lived in Arizona since 1983. Ms. Khosti has continued to be active involved with the Afghan community and volunteers when Afghans need assistance in interpreting language and/or customs. She has recently published a historical novel, *The Quest for the All Seeing Eye*, which won third place award for the best novel for 2007 from the Arizona Authors Association. She is an accomplished artist, painting mostly in watercolors and acrylics. Ms. Khosti is also a docent with the Phoenix Art Museum.

**Ellen Craswell**

**House Intern, Higher Education Committee**

Ellen Craswell is currently serving as an intern for the Arizona House of Representatives Majority Research on the Higher Education Committee. She will graduate in May from Arizona State University with a B.S. in Political Science and a minor in Religious Studies. She studied abroad at the University of Manchester, U.K. for the 2006-2007 academic year where she focused on the politics of various European countries. She hopes to continue her studies with graduate work in a similar field.