

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 22, 2021

Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6050

Dear Chairman Reed,

We write to request your assurance that members will be allowed to ask at least two rounds of questions during the open portion of the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing with Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley, and Commander of U.S. Central Command General Kenneth McKenzie on September 28, 2021.

The Biden administration's mishandling of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan was as disastrous as it was unnecessary. For years, we have known that the Afghan security forces would struggle to hold off the Taliban after we withdrew our forces. It should therefore have come as no surprise that the Afghan forces collapsed rapidly following our withdrawal. Yet the Administration failed to plan effectively for this eventuality. Instead, they assumed that the Afghan forces would be able and willing to hold off the Taliban for weeks if not longer after we left. Rather than planning for the worst, they planned for the best – and we have seen the results.

Now it is time for accountability. The American people want to know how the Administration – including the Department of Defense – failed to prepare for the collapse of the Afghan forces and allowed itself to be blindsided by the Taliban's final advance. They want to know when, why, and by whom the decisions were made that led to thirteen American lives lost, hundreds of Americans stranded behind enemy lines, and tens of thousands of refugees coming to our nation without proper vetting. And they want those responsible to face consequences for their actions.

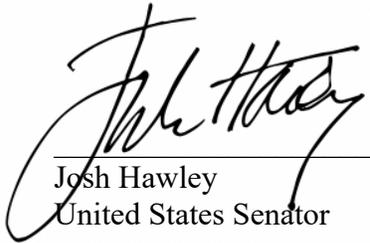
As members of the Armed Services Committee, it is our duty to ensure the American people get the answers they deserve. But we can only do so if we are allowed to ask multiple rounds of questions during the open portion of the hearing on September 28th. The standard practice of allowing a single five-minute round of questions simply will not provide enough time for members to gather the necessary information. Nor can the opportunity to ask questions in the closed portion of the hearing make up for members' inability to ask multiple rounds of questions during the open portion, since answers given at the closed portion will not be publicly available.

The hearing on September 28th offers an opportunity to begin the process of accountability for the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. That process can only begin, though, if members are given the time required to ask tough questions of the witnesses before them. We therefore ask

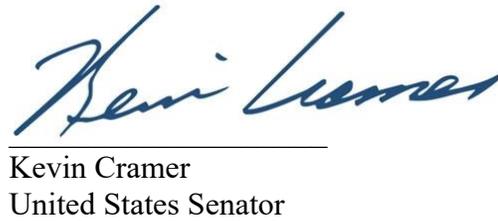
for your assurance that members will be allowed to ask at least two rounds of questions during the open portion of the hearing on September 28th.

Thank you for your consideration.

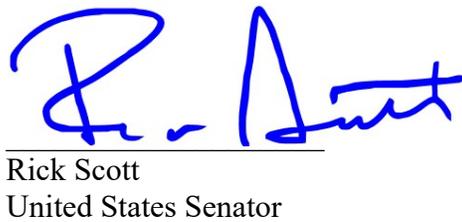
Sincerely,



Josh Hawley
United States Senator



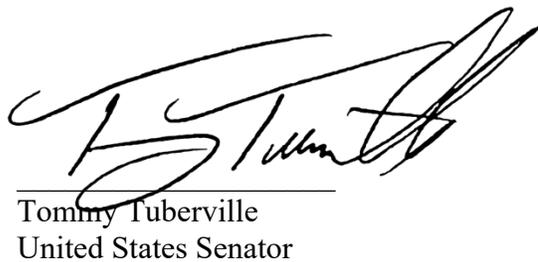
Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



Rick Scott
United States Senator



Tom Cotton
United States Senator



Tommy Tuberville
United States Senator