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Islamic Institute Attends White House Briefing on Role of Afghan Women

The Islamic Institute attended a briefing at the White House by Secretary of State Colin Powell and Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky as part of a week-long campaign by the Bush Administration and First Lady Laura Bush to highlight the crucial role of women in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Secretary Powell said, in part, "We will all co-chair a kickoff conference on major donors and international institutions for the reconstitution, the reconstruction of Afghan society. We will affirm our collective commitment to rebuild Afghanistan schools and hospitals, restore agriculture and small-scale enterprises, de-mine roads and villages. In all of these efforts and more, we will insist the women play prominent roles as planners, implementers, and beneficiaries." Secretary Powell also echoed what Muslims around the world continue to maintain: that the Taliban's treatment of women is contrary to the teachings of Islam. "There is absolutely nothing in the faith of Islam to justify their cruel treatment at the hands of the Taliban," he stated.

Under-Secretary Dobriansky reiterated the Administration's position that Afghans from all walks of life should be given a role in shaping the destiny of their country. While pointing to no arbitrary benchmark for participation by Afghan women in the new government, Dobriansky stated that this is an issue that our government will continue to monitor. Following her comments, she opened the floor to suggestions and questions from the assembled group of Members of Congress, Ambassadors, activists and journalists. Representatives of Afghan women, whose presence was coordinated by the Islamic Institute, raised the issue of including Afghan-Americans in the process of improving the lives of women and society in Afghanistan.

For the complete report on the treatment of Afghan women under Taliban rule, see
[HTTP://WWW.STATE.GOV/G/DRL/RLS/INDEX.CFM?ID=4804](http://WWW.STATE.GOV/G/DRL/RLS/INDEX.CFM?ID=4804)

For a transcript of the Secretary's comments, please see:
[HTTP://WWW.STATE.GOV/SECRETARY/RM/2001/INDEX.CFM?DOCID=6229](http://WWW.STATE.GOV/SECRETARY/RM/2001/INDEX.CFM?DOCID=6229)

Vote Scheduled for Trade Promotion Authority Bill

A vote has been scheduled for the Trade Promotion Authority legislation currently being considered by the House of Representatives. The House will decide the measure on December 6, prior to the winter recess. The revised bill reported to the House, H.R. 3005, the Bipartisan Trade Promotion Authority Act of 2001, will advance U.S. interests in bilateral, regional and global trade negotiations by restoring Trade Promotion Authority, or "Fast Track" authority, to the President or his representative.

TPA is the process by which Congress gives the President and or the U.S. Trade Representative the authority to enter into trade negotiations or lower U.S. export barriers. This would allow the United States to be involved in more multilateral and regional trade agreements, creating more jobs for Americans and increasing economic growth.

More information on Trade Promotion Authority, and H.R. 3005, can be found at the website of the US Trade Secretariat at WWW.US-TRADE.ORG.