The Peace Corps Reauthorization Act (H.R. 1456)
(House of Representatives Meetings Only)

Our Request

Ask your House Representative to co-sponsor H.R. 1456, the Peace Corps Reauthorization Act, and help secure final passage of the legislation.

Background

- This bipartisan bill is sponsored by the Co-Chairs of the House Peace Corps Caucus, Congressmen John Garamendi (D-CA) and Garret Graves (R-LA).

- The Peace Corps Reauthorization Act (PCRA) was first introduced in 2019. At that time, Congressman Garamendi, a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV), stated he wants this legislation to focus on supporting both serving and returned Peace Corps volunteers.

- At the conclusion of the previous (116th) Congress, the PCRA had 48 co–sponsors (43 Democrats and 5 Republicans).

- A new (117th) Congress means the PCRA had to be reintroduced. Congressman Garamendi reintroduced the bill on March 1, 2021 with a number of significant, additional provisions.

- The other original co–sponsors of the legislation are Representatives Ed Case (D-HI), Grace Meng (D-NY), Dean Philipps (D-MN), Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen (R-American Samoa), and Albio Sires (D-NJ).
Content of the Legislation

- Visit Congressman Garamendi’s [news release](#) for a summary of H.R. 1456, comments from lawmakers, and a link to the text of the legislation.

Funding

- The PCRA recommends increased Peace Corps funding of approximately 10 percent in each of the next four fiscal years, starting with $450 million in Fiscal Year 2022 and reaching $600 million in Fiscal Year 2025.

Health and Security Issues

- PCRA increases the federal workers’ compensation rate for all Peace Corps volunteers disabled by injury or illness during their service from a GS–7 to a GS–11 level, the same rate provided for Peace Corps Volunteers with dependent children under current law.

- PCRA extends post-service health coverage, requiring the Peace Corps to offer three months of paid, post-service health insurance (up from one month traditionally and two years last March for evacuated Volunteers) to returning Volunteers (with an opportunity for returning Volunteers to purchase an additional three months of such insurance). The legislation also instructs the Peace Corps to inform Volunteers of other health insurance options upon their return.

- PCRA calls upon the Peace Corps to consult with the Centers for Disease Control concerning recommendations for prescribing malaria prophylaxis. It also requires health personnel in malaria countries to receive adequate training in the side effects of such medication.

- PCRA includes the language of the Menstrual Equity in the Peace Corps Act sponsored by Rep. Grace Meng (D-NY). This bill requires the Peace Corps to ensure access to menstrual products for Volunteers who require them, either by increasing stipends or providing the products for affected Volunteers.

- PCRA calls for a report to Congress (within one year after passage of the bill) by the Government Accountability office on post service health care delivery (physical and mental) and insurance coverage.

- PCRA directs the Peace Corps and U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security to update plans and protocols for Peace Corps Volunteer security support and protection in foreign countries.
Other Support/Benefits/Recognition

- PCRA expedites reenrollment of volunteers whose service ended involuntarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic and allows Volunteers to resume in-country service once it is safe and prudent to do so.

- PCRA proposes raising the volunteer readjustment allowance to $417 a month, providing Volunteers who complete two years of service with $10,000 (up from $8,000) to rebuild their lives when they return home.

- PCRA pauses Peace Corps Volunteers’ 12-month hiring preference (Non-Competitive Eligibility, or NCE) for most federal job openings during any federal hiring freeze, government shutdown, or while a Volunteer receives federal worker’s compensation benefits (and is unable to work) for any injury during their Peace Corps service.

- Similar to March 2020, PCRA seeks to codify that volunteers who face evacuation and the end of their service through no fault of their own receive benefits determined by the Peace Corps Director, and are given expedited consideration for redeployment.

- PCRA includes the language of the Respect for Peace Corps Volunteers Act sponsored by Rep. Albio Sires (D-NJ) since 2013. This bill would confirm that an allowable use of the Peace Corps name, official seal, and emblem would include its use at gravesites or in death notices.

Other Provisions

- PCRA directs the Peace Corps to establish new Volunteer opportunities that promote internet technology-adoption in developing countries and engage tech-savvy Americans.

- PCRA would reestablish a National Advisory Council to bring more exposure to the agency and its work. The council would also be charged with considering key issues related to the Peace Corps’ future, including agency progress in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion and examining financial barriers that might prevent individuals from applying to the Peace Corps.

- PCRA extends whistleblower protections to serving Volunteers.

- PCRA includes a reporting requirement that calls for exploring expansion of Peace Corps Volunteer opportunities in the Pacific region.
Key Talking Points

- **Respect and Support Peace Corps**: The work of the Peace Corps deserves our respect and support. This legislation contains a number of key provisions that recognize and honor those who serve our nation in the Peace Corps.

- **Pick Your Passion**: With so many important provisions, it will not be possible in your meetings to discuss all the items contained in H.R. 1456. You (and other speakers in your meeting) should choose three or four of the provisions listed above which you feel strongly about or have expertise. Highlight the issues about which you feel most knowledgeable and passionate.

- **Funding Increases that are Responsible and Necessary**: H.R. 1456 calls for steady, sustainable increases in Peace Corps funding over the next four fiscal years. Along with providing financial resources to assist the Peace Corps in moving towards the 10,000 Volunteer minimum referenced in the original Peace Corps Act, increased funding is also necessary to better implement reforms outlined in this and previous legislation. (See our Peace Corps funding issues brief for more talking points.)

- **Prioritize Evacuated Volunteers Who Wish to Serve**: It has now been more than a year since the COVID-19 pandemic caused the Peace Corps to evacuate 7,300 Volunteers, many of whom were only a few months into the start of their service. While many Volunteers have pursued other opportunities, we must respect and support those evacuees who are managing their lives to allow them to return to service.

- **Peace Corps Volunteer Health, Safety and Security**: There are several provisions that promote improved volunteer health, safety, and security which Peace Corps consistently notes is the agency’s highest priority.

- **Disability Pay–Overview**: A longstanding need for improvement involves increasing the payment for RPCVs who are disabled due to illness or injuries stemming from their Peace Corps service. By raising the pay scale based on the current GS–7 level to GS–11, monthly disability pay would increase from approximately $1,800 to more than $2,500. This critical increase for some of the most vulnerable members of our community would cost the agency roughly $2 million per year.

- **Enhanced Non–Competitive Eligibility**: One of the few post-service benefits RPCVs receive is one year of non-competitive eligibility for federal hiring. H.R. 1456 supports RPCVs in getting their full one-year opportunity by “stopping the clock” on eligibility should there be a federal hiring freeze or government shutdown. The legislation also delays the one year of eligibility for RPCVs who come home with a service related disability that prevents them from working.

- **National Advisory Council**: Dormant for more than 30 years, a high-level advisory council would heighten the profile and status of the Peace Corps and help propel the agency forward on key matters, including diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts across the agency, as well as strategies to eliminate economic barriers to service.