Support Peace Corps Funding!

Dear Colleague:

As Co-Chairs of the Congressional Peace Corps Caucus, we encourage you to sign on to this letter to the leadership of the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Subcommittee asking for not less than level funding of $410 million for Peace Corps in FY18.

Peace Corps celebrates its 56th anniversary this year, and the agency’s mission is just as relevant and vital as when it was founded in 1961. Peace Corps Volunteers are currently on the frontlines of development in 65 countries. They are representatives for America in communities where people may have never before met an American. Their development work plays an important role in building the community links that underpin American diplomacy and security.

Not surprisingly, demand for Peace Corps Volunteers far exceeds supply. More than 20 countries have requested Peace Corps Volunteers, and still other countries have requested an increase in the number of Volunteers. Last fiscal year, 23,987 Americans applied for the Peace Corps, but the agency was only able to place 3,790 in Volunteer positions. An appropriation of $410 million is essential to ensure that Peace Corps can continue to strengthen all aspects of its operations and meet demand in priority areas around the globe.

Help your constituents take on the toughest job they’ll ever love – the Peace Corps. To sign on, please contact Gabriel Sehr (Gabriel.Sehr@mail.house.gov) in Congressman Garamendi’s office. The deadline to sign on is Friday, March 24, 2017.

Sincerely,

JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress
Peace Corps Volunteer
Ethiopia, 1966-68
Co-Chair, Peace Corps Caucus

JOE KENNEDY
Member of Congress
Peace Corps Volunteer
Dominican Republic, 2004-06
Co-Chair, Peace Corps Caucus

DATE
Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey,

Thank you for your continued commitment to Peace Corps. Because of your leadership, thousands of Americans have had the opportunity to serve their country abroad, and thousands of communities around the world have benefited from the work of Peace Corps Volunteers.

Peace Corps celebrates its 56th anniversary this year, and the agency’s mission is just as relevant and vital as when it was founded in 1961. Peace Corps Volunteers are currently on the frontlines of development in 65 countries. They are representatives for America in communities where people may have never before met an American. Their development work plays an important role in building the community links that underpin American diplomacy and security.

Host countries recognize the value of Peace Corps Volunteers; in fact, more than 20 countries currently have requests pending for Peace Corps Volunteers, and other countries with existing Peace Corps programs have requested increases in the number of Volunteers. Unfortunately, Peace Corps currently lacks the funding to place Volunteers everywhere they are needed. This is even more unfortunate given that so many Americans want to serve their country as Peace Corps Volunteers. Last year, Peace Corps received 23,987 applications—near a 40-year high—for only 3,790 Volunteer positions.

To maximize its limited resources, Peace Corps has prioritized reforms that modernize agency operations and increase efficiency. These include eliminating red tape from the application process and implementing a data-driven approach to decision-making. Peace Corps has also undertaken extensive efforts to improve Volunteer security and healthcare. In FY15, Peace Corps achieved full implementation of the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011, which directed the agency to strengthen sexual assault risk-reduction and response operations. In FY16, the agency also implemented an electronic medical records system to enhance medical support to Volunteers.

Finally, in recent years, Peace Corps has focused on maximizing its impact in the field by increasing Volunteer placements in priority areas. This focus on strategic impact includes increasing the number of Volunteers in priority countries, such as Ukraine, and opening new programs, such as in Myanmar. In addition, Peace Corps has worked to incorporate Volunteer projects into whole-of-government initiatives that support U.S. development priorities, including the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the President’s Malaria Initiative, Feed the Future, and Let Girls Learn. And in the coming months, Peace Corps Volunteers in Latin America, the Pacific, and the Caribbean will collaborate with local Ministries of Health on Zika prevention.
To allow Peace Corps to continue to strengthen its programs and pursue innovations we respectfully request that you appropriate no less than $410 million for Peace Corps in FY18. This appropriation would allow Peace Corps to maintain the number of Volunteers placed in the field; maintain and refine key reforms to agency operations, including support for Volunteers’ health and security; and continue operations in countries and initiatives where Volunteers’ impact will be the most felt. We appreciate the difficult task that faces the Committee and appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

JOHN GARAMENDI  
Member of Congress

JOE KENNEDY  
Member of Congress