

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1804

September 16, 2011

Chairman Patrick Leahy
Subcommittee for State
and Foreign Operations
437 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Lindsey Graham
Subcommittee for State
and Foreign Operations
290 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Graham:

We respectfully request that you appropriate robust funding for the Peace Corps in the FY 2012 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill.

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Peace Corps and, since its inception, the group has deployed nearly a quarter million Americans to serve impoverished communities in the name of peace. For just 0.8% of our foreign affairs budget, the Peace Corps is one of our most cost-effective agents of diplomacy, development, and soft power, the lasting benefits of which flow back into our schools and communities at home.

The Peace Corps is unparalleled in scope and impact. Since 1961, Peace Corps Volunteers have served in 139 developing countries around the world, including key priority areas for the United States. Currently, 8,655 volunteers from all 50 states are serving in 79 developing countries. More than 40 Peace Corps sites help administer the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and nearly 25% of Peace Corps volunteers serve in a third of all countries considered Muslim. In 2010 alone, the Peace Corps opened programs in Colombia, Sierra Leone, and Indonesia. Sufficient funding would help to open programs in Nepal and Vietnam this year, among other countries.

Demand for the Peace Corps far exceeds supply. The House of Representatives' recently-proposed allocation of \$374 million—a 15% cut from the President's FY 2012 request—is not sufficient to adequately meet the demand. Over 20 countries have requested volunteers, and still other countries have requested an increase in the number of volunteers. This past year, 13,500 Americans applied for the Peace Corps, but the agency could only afford to place about 4,500. Stronger funding is essential to ensure that the Peace Corps can continue to support all aspects of their operations to meet ever-rising demand in the Middle East, North Africa and beyond. Moreover, these funds are needed to provide volunteers with the proper medical care and other support they vitally need.

Last March, President Obama honored the Peace Corps' 50th Anniversary with a Presidential Proclamation. In it, he stated that the agency's mission is "more relevant today than ever." We could not agree more. Peace Corps volunteers have shown the world a hopeful side of America that reflects our fundamental ideals of peace and progress. Now more than ever, as the United

States and the international community face tenuous economic, environmental, and political times, we must support this low-cost, high-return investment in peace. It is vital for our citizens to learn the many languages and dialects which volunteers can master at the end of two years and also be versed in local cultures.

In January of this year we mourned the passing of a great American and the First Director of the Peace Corps, Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr. We can think of no better way to honor him and his legacy than asking the Committee to fully support the Peace Corps program for Fiscal Year 2012. We look forward to your continued leadership in helping to advance the Peace Corps and the cause of service to our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bob Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.