

PEACE CORPS, THE NEXT 50 YEARS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE, PEACE
CORPS, AND GLOBAL NARCOTICS AFFAIRS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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OCTOBER 6, 2011
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PEACE CORPS: THE NEXT 50 YEARS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2011

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE,
PEACE CORPS, AND GLOBAL NARCOTICS AFFAIRS,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 11 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Robert Menendez (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Senators Menendez, Shaheen, Rubio, and Isakson.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY

Senator MENENDEZ. The hearing will come to order. Our apologies to our former colleagues, who I know understand the process of the Senate and votes and that we have no control over when that happens. So thank you for bearing with us.

This year, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps, signed into law on September 22, 1961, we celebrate the success of the Peace Corps' first 50 years. And today, we convene this hearing to evaluate what needs to be done to ensure its continued success over the next 50 years.

Clearly, it is a new world since President Kennedy created the Peace Corps, a vastly different place than it was when he signed the concept into law. In 1961, we were in the midst of the cold war. The Berlin Wall had gone up on August 13 of that year, only a few weeks earlier. The Soviet Union dominated our foreign policy agenda. Kabul and Baghdad were not even blips on our radar screen, let alone a click away on a computer screen on Google Earth.

Now, in the post-9/11 digital world, the task and mission of the Peace Corps may not have changed, but the world and circumstances into which we send our Volunteers has changed considerably.

Today, I hope to hear from our panelists on what those changes are and how they have affected the Peace Corps' overall mission, if at all. And if so, what we can do to mitigate any adverse impact on the effectiveness of the program.

I hope to hear from our experts about how we can enhance the mission of the Peace Corps and make it even more effective in living up to the idealism, innovation, and generosity of more than 200,000 Americans who have volunteered in over 139 nations in the last half century.

When John F. Kennedy created the Peace Corps, he saw it as more than a quixotic agency of young people on a mission of peace. He saw it as a fulfillment, a fundamental fulfillment of our values as a nation. He sought to encourage a better understanding between Americans from every walk of life and the people and cultures of other nations.

I am sure my good friends, the distinguished Senators, former Senators, sit before us, especially Chris Dodd, one of our panelists today, a Peace Corps Volunteer himself, remembers what our late friend and colleague Ted Kennedy always used to say. "It is always better to send in the Peace Corps than the Marine Corps."

Sending in the Marines, albeit necessary on occasion, is never a welcomed option. But sending in the Peace Corps is always a welcomed opportunity for us to extend the hand of freedom and democracy around the world and to show the world the power of our values rather than the value of our power.

In the last 50 years, our Volunteers have enriched the lives of thousands of people in thousands of villages around the world, and by so doing, they have enriched their own lives. And when they returned home, they have enriched our communities and our Nation. We are a better place because of their commitment to a program that has been one of our great successes. Today's panelists will help us determine how we can build on that success and make the Peace Corps better.

It is important to note that this hearing is to assess, not to criticize—to evaluate, not to castigate. It is my hope that this hearing will be a constructive discussion that moves us closer to the goal of making the next 50 years of the Peace Corps even better than the first 50.

One hundred years of progress, reaching out to those around the world, extending American values and a helping hand is our goal. And I am a firm believer that one must be open and honest in acknowledging the progress and the challenges of the past before one can plan for the future. Today is the beginning of that process.

I have invited to testify before the committee witnesses who love the Peace Corps, yet understand its challenges and have a genuine interest in strengthening the organization. We will hear testimony from Aaron Williams, the director of the Peace Corps; my good friend and former colleague, Senator Chris Dodd, who was the chair of this subcommittee and now chairman and CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America. And I am ready to play a part any time you want me to, Chris. [Laughter.]

And the former distinguished Senator from Pennsylvania, Harris Wofford, who is former legal assistant to President Kennedy and the associate director of the Peace Corps as well.

Kathy Buller, who is the inspector general of the Peace Corps; Kevin Quigley, the president of the National Peace Corps Association; Liz Odongo, the training and outreach director of the D.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence and a returned Peace Corps Volunteer.

I know Senator Rubio is on his way. He got called, in addition to the vote, to a meeting of the Commerce Committee that is an important quick markup off the floor. He intends to be here and has a statement to make.

But in the interim, I know that Senator Isakson is very interested in the Peace Corps, and I would be happy to acknowledge him at this time.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHNNY ISAKSON,
U.S. SENATOR FROM GEORGIA**

Senator ISAKSON. Well, thank you very much, Chairman Menendez, and welcome to my dear friend Chris Dodd. And Senator Wofford, we are delighted to have you here today.

And I apologize that I am going to have to leave about as quick as I make my remarks, but I have the same challenges that Marco Rubio does.

You know, in my capacity the last 5 years as ranking member or chairman, depending on who was in power, of the Africa Subcommittee of Foreign Relations, I have traveled that continent. And in that continent, I have met with Peace Corps Volunteers all over Africa and, most recently, met with them in Beijing, China, where we now have over 200 in China in the Peace Corps. And they are remarkable emissaries of the United States of America and the best ambassadors you could possibly have.

I want to particularly pay tribute to Aaron Williams and what he has done since he has taken over the realm of the Peace Corps. As Chris Dodd will remember, he helped me last year try and pass in the Senate the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act, and we came close but fell a little short. I am pleased to say that we passed it 2 weeks ago in the United States Senate. It will be passed in the House of Representatives, I think, next week and will become law very soon.

It is a tribute to a young lady who was a Peace Corps Volunteer from my State who was brutally murdered in Benin, and I think, as a victim of that, I have worked hard—and I appreciate the help Harris has given us in this regard, by the way—worked hard to see to it the Peace Corps had systems in place so that our Volunteers had the best of protections equal to that of whistleblowers in the Government.

And Aaron Williams has been instrumental in seeing to it that that Peace Corps Protection Act and those policies are basically almost totally already implemented within the Peace Corps. And I want to publicly thank him on behalf of the Puzey family and all the Peace Corps Volunteers who have served and who do serve.

On this 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps, I think we could do nothing better than to enhance and improve our protection of Peace Corps Volunteers, and I thank all those, Senator Dodd and Aaron Williams, who have helped me along the way. And I appreciate your taking your time to be here today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Senator Isakson.

So I believe both of our distinguished colleagues don't really need an introduction, but I will give you one anyhow.

Senator Harris Wofford was a special assistant to President Kennedy for civil rights, instrumental in the formation of the Peace Corps, served as its special representative to Africa, director of operations in Ethiopia, associate director before being elected to the United States Senate from the State of Pennsylvania.

He is a noted activist for volunteerism and national service. And after his time in the Senate, Senator Wofford served as the chief executive officer of the Cooperation for National and Community Service and continues to serve on the boards of several service organizations.

Senator Chris Dodd answered President Kennedy's call and joined the Peace Corps after graduating college. He served in the Dominican Republic from 1966 to 1968. He was Connecticut's longest serving Member of Congress, having served 6 years in the House of Representatives and 30 years in the U.S. Senate and, as I said, a chair of this subcommittee. Introduced the Peace Corps Empowerment Act in 2007, the Peace Corps Improvement and Expansion Act in 2009, which combined a reform and growth strategy for the Peace Corps.

So welcome back again. And Senator Wofford, please start us off. Your full statement will be included in the record, but we ask that you summarize it in 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF HON. HARRIS WOFFORD, D-PA, FORMER
MEMBER, U.S. SENATE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Senator WOFFORD. Senator Menendez, thank you for your leadership and, Senator Isakson, for yours.

I have heard you tell reports of coming back and having met Peace Corps Volunteers on several occasions, and I have followed suit in recent years with my grandsons. Whenever we get a 6-week trip around the world that they earn when they turn 12, we see Peace Corps Volunteers, and it is one way to keep up.

And thank you for inviting me to talk about the Peace Corps and particularly to give a historical perspective on the Peace Corps and the vision behind its establishment.

Excuse me. Reading glasses are worthwhile.

For many of us, the celebration of the Peace Corps' 50th anniversary last October 14 at the University of Michigan began there, when hundreds of former Peace Corps Volunteers, staff, students, gathered out at midnight outside the student union. We were there on a cold, drizzling night to mark the time when that Presidential candidate John Kennedy struck the spark that led to the Peace Corps' establishment 4½ months later.

Kennedy was late in arriving, about 2 a.m., but found thousands there on that cold night and decided to make impromptu remarks. Fifty years later, we heard and saw on a big screen Kennedy's 3-minute talk. He asked, "How many of you are going to be doctors, are willing to spend your days in Ghana?" He asked how many technicians and engineers were willing to serve 1 or 2 years around the world and if others were willing to contribute part of their lives.

He thought Americans would be willing, but the effort must be far greater than we have ever made in the past, he said. There was loud applause that night, but almost no press treatment. A small group of students quickly formed an organization, Michigan Students Committed to World Responsibility, and drafted and began circulating a pledge saying they were willing.

Back at Kennedy campaign headquarters, Sargent Shriver and I knew nothing about all of this until the mother of one of the stu-

dents called to say that nearly 1,000 students had signed the pledge, and they wanted help in arranging a time when they could present it to Kennedy. When Kennedy was told about this remarkable response, before he even saw the pledges, he said, "I want to propose an overseas Volunteer Program in one of my last major campaign speeches."

At the Cow Palace in San Francisco in the last days of the campaign, he did. He promised to create a Peace Corps to widespread press coverage and a subsequent wave of enthusiasm on college campuses.

On January 20, 1961, while watching the inaugural parade, Kennedy asked Sargent Shriver to study and recommend how to create such a Peace Corps. As the campaign deputy to Shriver, I was lucky that next day to be asked to help him gather and to participate in the task force that for 5 weeks, day and night, prepared the plan for launching the Peace Corps.

Volunteers would serve for 2 years, plus training. They would be of all adult ages, but the signs were that most would be recent college graduates. Within 4 days of receiving Shriver's report, the President on March 1, by Executive order, established the Peace Corps and simultaneously sent a message to Congress asking for legislation to authorize and appropriate funds to support it.

Meanwhile, with discretionary funds in the State Department budget, the President enabled Shriver to enlist a staff, recruit and select Volunteers, and send the first Volunteers forth, landing in Ghana before the end of August. There were several hundred Volunteers in the first countries by the time Congress passed the Peace Corps Act September 22.

Now, can you imagine all that happening—first, by Executive order and then, in a few months, congressional action—with large bipartisan support? In the next 2 years, while serving as special assistant to President Kennedy, I was on call to Shriver, including the first 3-week trip around the world to heads of state to see if they wanted Peace Corps Volunteers. They did.

In that short history, note the crucial role of students in the Peace Corps' creation, beginning with a small group who were determined to act. Sargent Shriver repeatedly said if those Michigan students had not taken that initiative and got nearly 1,000 students to sign that pledge saying they were willing to serve, there is no reason to think that in the pressures of the transition and the crises that followed, the Peace Corps idea would have emerged as a priority.

Sargent Shriver's name became a verb. To "shriverize" meant to be bolder and faster and to make it big. Senator Jay Rockefeller the other day, who was on the first organizing staff, and I think the great champion of the Peace Corps in the Senate in my time—Chris Dodd, was there—recently said that Sargent Shriver was the greatest one, bar none, that he ever worked with. He was also the most fun.

He believed that for the Peace Corps to be small and to develop slowly, it would be seen merely as a symbolic Government public relations effort. When we came out of the State Department one day, and an expert there had said it would take 2 years or more maybe before a project that started could actually land Volunteers

on the ground in the other country, he said, "We are going to get 600 Volunteers in six countries in 6 months." I think we did. He aimed to make the Peace Corps the most antibureaucratic bureaucracy in Government history, and I think it was.

In August 1962, I briefed the President before he went out to the White House lawn to send off some 600 Volunteers, including 300 going to teach in Ethiopia, where I was soon to become the country director and Peace Corps' special representative to Africa for the next 2 years with my family. Walking back to the Oval Office, Kennedy conveyed his delight that the Peace Corps was proving itself. "This will be really serious," he said, "when it is 100,000 Volunteers going overseas each year, and then there will be 1 million Americans who have had firsthand experience in Asia, Africa," as he would say, "and Latin America. Then, for the first time, we will have a large constituency for a good foreign policy."

The Peace Corps now numbers a little more than 8,000 Volunteers a year, and if the President's budget is cut back substantially, that number will decrease and probably no new countries will have their wish for Peace Corps Volunteers fulfilled. In 50 years, only 200,000 have served, not the several million Kennedy would have hoped for by now.

When Shriver and I left the Peace Corps in late 1966, there were 16,000 Volunteers overseas or in training, and the plan was soon to reach 250,000. By then, President Johnson had called the Peace Corps a worldwide training for great citizens. Vice President Humphrey, who chaired the Peace Corps Advisory Council, said that by 1970, we hope there would be about 50,000 back here in the United States.

Now fast forward to 2 weeks ago when some 5,000 returned Volunteers and staff came to Washington for 4 days of celebrations, conferences, and country reunions. On Sunday, in a march of flags, we walked down from John and Robert Kennedy's graves at Arlington Cemetery, across the Memorial Bridge to the Lincoln Memorial. The sun came out, and for the long, colorful line of Volunteers carrying the flags of the 139 countries in which they had served, we were proud; proud of what 200,000 Volunteers had accomplished.

But many of us also remembered the high hopes and potential that was lost by the drain of resources for the Vietnam war. By the early 1970s, the Corps was down to just a little over 5,000 a year. It is painful to think of that lost opportunity for Americans to have made a far larger contribution to mutual understanding and the world's economic and educational development and to peace.

You, on this committee, face very difficult budget choices. The urgent is often the enemy of the important. But in this case, the important and the urgent come together. Many of us from the training school of the Peace Corps hope that the President and Congress will find the way to get on the track to double the Peace Corps.

After 9/11, President George Bush asked for that. And in his Presidential campaign, Barack Obama repeatedly called for the doubling of the Peace Corps and, in a message to the National Peace Corps Association, called for the renewal of President Kennedy's hope for 100,000 a year.

The Peace Corps and other forms of international service, Mr. Chairman, are as important today as they were in 1960, when Kennedy said that the effort must be far greater than we have ever made. It is my hope that such effort may yet be possible when, once again, idea and fate meet in a creative hour.

In closing, I want to call your attention to two recent documents that are pertinent to the issues in this hearing. The National Peace Corps Association, whose president, Kevin Quigley, is a witness today, and Civic Enterprises, headed by John Bridgeland, President George W. Bush's assistant for service and his White House USA Freedom Corps director, they have just released a report, "A Call To Peace: Perspectives of Volunteers on the Peace Corps at 50."

It includes a comprehensive survey of the representative sample of Volunteers from all five decades conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates. The survey asked the Volunteers to answer some of the questions you are asking about what the Peace Corps does well, what its challenges were and are, and what is the vision for the future? A good sign for the future is that the survey found that 98 percent said they would recommend the Peace Corps to their child, grandchild, or close family member.

Kevin Quigley will be putting that report in the hearing record and discussing it in his testimony. As two of the coauthors, we think you will find it of value in assessing the Corps' strengths and weaknesses and pointing the way forward to a stronger, better, and much larger Peace Corps. We will be ready to talk with you or your staff after you or they have a chance to read this report.

I want to put in the record now, and last, a different kind of report that I find of great value that has just been published by the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan, sponsored by the Brookings Institution Initiative on International Volunteering and Service and the National Peace Corps Association, with support from the Building Bridges Coalition, entitled "Peace Corps: Charting the Future of International Service."

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The report referred to was too voluminous to include in the printed hearing. It will be maintained in the permanent record of the committee and can also be accessed by the following link: <http://www.fordschool.umich.edu/news/peacecorps>.]

Senator WOFFORD. It gives well-edited excerpts from talks during the university's national symposium on the future of international service that we were at last October. They entitled my keynote talk there, "Time To Be Inventive Again."

With those as watch words for the next 50 years, I will stop. For the Peace Corps to be ready for new opportunities when idea and fate once again meet, we will need to be more inventive if we are going to do our duty.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Senator Wofford follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. HARRIS WOFFORD

Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Rubio, thank you for inviting me here today to join Senator Dodd, who was a great champion of the Peace Corps in the Senate, and other key colleagues—the excellent director of the Peace Corps and the president of the National Peace Corps Association. You asked me to give a historical perspective on the Peace Corps—the vision behind its establishment, my assessment

of the Corps' strengths and weaknesses, and the importance of international volunteer service.

For many of us, the celebration of the Peace Corps' 50th anniversary began last October 14 at the University of Michigan when hundreds of current University and former Peace Corps Volunteers and staff gathered after midnight outside the student union. We were there on a cold, drizzling night to mark the time and place that Presidential candidate John Kennedy struck the spark that led to the Peace Corps' establishment 4½ months later. Kennedy was late in arriving, nearly 2 a.m., but found thousands waiting on a cold fall night and decided to make some impromptu remarks.

Fifty years later, we heard and saw on a big screen Kennedy's 3-minute talk. He asked, "How many of you who are going to be doctors are willing to spend your days in Ghana?" He asked how many technicians and engineers were willing to serve around the world—how many young people there are willing to serve "1 or 2 years . . . to contribute part of your life." He said he thought "Americans are willing . . . but the effort must be far greater than we have ever made in the past." He ended with a challenge: "This university is not maintained . . . merely to help its graduates have an economic advantage in the life struggle. There is certainly a greater purpose."

There was loud applause and cheers that night in 1960, but almost no mention of Kennedy's call to serve in the news media. A small group of students quickly formed an organization, "Michigan Students Committed to World Responsibility," and drafted and began circulating a pledge saying they were willing "to apply their knowledge through direct participation in the underdeveloped communities of the world."

Back at Kennedy campaign headquarter Sargent Shriver and I knew nothing about all this until the mother of one of the students, Mildred Jeffrey, who was a leader in our campaign civil rights section, called to say nearly a thousand students had signed the pledge and they wanted help in arranging time when they could present it to Kennedy. According to Ted Sorensen, it was when Kennedy was told about this response, before he even saw the pledges, that he decided to propose an overseas volunteer program in one of his last major campaign talks. At the Cow Palace in San Francisco in the last days of the campaign, to widespread press coverage and a subsequent wave of enthusiasm on college campuses, he described and promised if elected to create a Peace Corps.

On January 20, 1961, according to what Sargent Shriver told me, while they were watching the Inaugural parade, Kennedy asked Sargent Shriver to study and recommend how to create such a Peace Corps. As a campaign deputy to Shriver, I was lucky the next day to be asked to help him gather and participate in the task force that for 5 weeks, day and night, prepared the plan for launching the Peace Corps. The three goals were set—to help other countries meet their needs for development, to help people in those countries better understand America, and for Americans to better understand other people. Volunteers would serve for 2 years, plus training. They would be of all adult ages, but the signs were that most would be recent college graduates and both Shriver and Kennedy wanted to move fast and be able to enlist some of the best graduates of the 1961 year, who in large numbers were writing the White House to ask how they could apply.

Within 4 days of receiving the Shriver's report, the President, on March 1, by Executive order, established the Peace Corps, and simultaneously sent a message to Congress asking for legislation to authorize and appropriate funds to support it. Meanwhile with discretionary funds in the State Department budget, the President enabled Shriver to enlist a staff, recruit and select Volunteers, and send the first Volunteers forth, landing in Ghana before the end of August. There were several hundred Volunteers in the first countries or in training for other countries by the time Congress passed the Peace Corps Act on September 22.

Can you imagine all that happening today, first by Executive order and in a few months congressional action with large bipartisan support?

In the next 2 years, while serving as Special Assistant to President Kennedy I was on call to help Shriver, including accompanying him on his first 3-week trip, around the world trip, to meet heads of state in Africa and Asia, to see if they wanted Peace Corps Volunteers. They did.

In the first country, President Kwame Nkrumah of newly independent Ghana invited the Peace Corps to help meet Ghana's urgent need for teachers. You might be interested to know that Nkrumah then asked if American schools would welcome some graduates of the University of Ghana to come and teach African history in our schools. Shriver enthusiastically said "Yes," and as the outgoing president of the School Board of Chicago assured them a warm welcome in that city's schools.

Nkrumah was gone and Lyndon Johnson was President before the idea of reciprocity was tried in a Peace Corps initiated small-scale pilot program called Volunteers to America. It continued with great promise until negative opposition in Congress to the idea of foreigners coming to teach and serve in America and budget pressures of the Vietnam war caused cutbacks in President Johnson's ambitious international education programs. I would put some substantial form of reciprocal international service high on the list of unfinished business for the Peace Corps or for other appropriate channels to supplement traditional academic study abroad for Americans and here for foreign students in international exchange with the powerful education in action of service.

In that short history note the crucial role of students in the Corps' creation, beginning with that little group of Michigan students who were determined to act. Sargent Shriver repeatedly wrote and said that if those Michigan students had not taken the initiative and got nearly a thousand students to sign the pledge saying they were willing to serve there is no reason to think that in the pressures of the transition and the crises that followed for the new administration the Peace Corps idea would have emerged as a priority.

But Shriver's own role in making the Peace Corps a success cannot be overemphasized. For those who worked with him in the 1960s his name became a verb: To "Shriverize" meant to be bolder and faster and to make it big. Senator Jay Rockefeller, who was on the first organizing staff, recently said at a 50th anniversary event that Shriver was the greatest one, bar none, he ever worked with. I also think he was the most inventive and the most fun.

Shriver believed that if the Peace Corps were to be small and one that developed slowly it would be seen merely as a symbolic public relations effort. When a professional aid expert in the State Department advised that it would take 2 years or maybe more to get an overseas project actually operating in a country, Shriver went out telling us we were going to get 600 Volunteers in six countries in 6 months—and I think we did. He aimed to make the Peace Corps the most antibureaucratic bureaucracy in government history, and I think it probably was. I also like to think it can still be that kind of pace-setting agency.

Kennedy liked that spirit, and kept asking for speed. In August 1962 I briefed the President before he went out to the White House lawn to send off some 600 Volunteers, including 300 going to teach in Ethiopia (where I was soon to become the country director and the Peace Corps' special representative to Africa for the next 2 years). Walking back to the Oval Office, Kennedy conveyed his delight that the Peace Corps was proving itself and said, "This will be really serious when it's 100,000 Volunteers going overseas each year and then there will be a million Americans who have had firsthand experience in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Then for the first time we'll have a large constituency for a good foreign policy."

The Peace Corps is now sending a little more than 8,000 Volunteers a year, and if the President's budget request is cut back substantially, that number will decrease. In 50 years only 200,000 have served, not the several million Kennedy would have hoped for by now. When Shriver and I left the Peace Corps in late 1966 there were 16,000 Volunteers overseas or in training, and the plan was soon to reach 25,000.

In 1965, at President Johnson's request, Vice President Humphrey and the Peace Corps Advisory Council, which he chaired, convened a 3-day conference—"Citizens in a Time of Change"—that drew to Washington 1,000 of the first 3,000 Returned Volunteers. For 3 days, with more than a hundred leaders of the major sectors of our society, they discussed the future of America and their role in it, including what they could do to bring their new understanding of the world home to this country. The President called the Peace Corps "a worldwide training school for Great Citizens." Vice President Humphrey told them: "By 1970 we hope there will be about 50,000 back here in the United States."

Fast forward to two weeks ago when some 5,000 Returned Volunteers and staff came to Washington for 4 days of celebrations, conferences, and country reunions. On Sunday we marched down from John and Robert Kennedy's graves at Arlington Cemetery, across Memorial Bridge to the Lincoln memorial. The sun came out for the long colorful line of marchers carrying the flags of the 139 countries in which they had served. We were proud of what 200,000 Volunteers had accomplished but many of us also remembered the high hopes and the potential that was lost by the drain of resources for the Vietnam war. By the early 1970s the Corps was down to just a little over 5,000 a year. It is painful to think of that lost opportunity for Americans to make a far larger contribution to mutual understanding and economic and educational development—and to peace.

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come together. Most of us from the “training school” of the Peace Corps hope that the Congress and the President will find the way to get on the track to double the Peace Corps. After 9/11 President George Bush asked for that. In his Presidential campaign, Barack Obama repeatedly called for that doubling of the Corps and in a message to the National Peace Corps Association called for the renewal of President Kennedy’s hope for 100,000 a year.

The Peace Corps and other forms of international service are as important today as they were in 1960 when Kennedy said the “effort must be far greater than we have ever made.” I hope that such effort may yet be possible, and that once again idea and fate will meet in a creative hour.

In closing, I call to your attention two recent publications that are pertinent to the issues in this hearing. The National Peace Corps Association, whose president, Kevin Quigley, is testifying today, and Civic Enterprises, headed by John Bridgeland, President George W. Bush’s assistant for citizen service and the White House USA Freedom Corps director, have just released a report, “A Call to Peace: Perspectives of Volunteers on the Peace Corps at 50.” It includes a comprehensive survey of a representative sample of Volunteers from all five decades conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates. The survey asked the Volunteers to answer some of the questions you are asking about what the Peace Corps does well, what its challenges were and are, and what is the vision for the future.

A good sign is that the survey found that 98 percent said they would recommend the Peace Corps to their child, grandchild, or close family member. Kevin Quigley will be putting that report in the hearing record and discussing it with you. As two of the coauthors, we hope you will find it of value. We will be happy to talk with you or your staff after you or they have a chance to read it.

I want to put in the record another report dealing with your questions today, “PEACE CORPS: Charting the Future of International Service,” by the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan. It contains the talks given at their symposium on last October, sponsored by the Brookings Institution Initiative on International Volunteering and Service and the National Peace Corps Association, with support from the Building Bridges Coalition. Entitled “PEACE CORPS: Charting the Future of International Service.” You will find further thoughts by Kevin Quigley and Peace Corps director Aaron Williams.

The School entitled my talk: “Time to Be Inventive Again.” Those are good watch words for the next 50 years. For the Peace Corp to be ready for new opportunities when idea and fate meet again we need to be more inventive if we are going to do our duty.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Senator Wofford.

Senator Rubio has joined us. He is the ranking member of the committee and graciously agreed to delay his opening statement so that we may hear from Senator Dodd.

Senator Dodd.

STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER J. DODD, D-CT, FORMER MEMBER, U.S. SENATE, RETURNED PEACE CORP VOLUNTEER, WASHINGTON, DC

Senator DODD. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And Senator Rubio, it is a pleasure to meet you, see you. I think I went by, in fact, on your swearing-in day. I missed you and your celebratory gathering in the Senate office building. So nice to see you this morning, and welcome.

This is my maiden voyage back to the Senate, and it has not been a year yet, but my first time back in the buildings. And hearing these bells going off, I am having a reaction here to myself. [Laughter.]

I feel like I should be jumping up and running over for a quorum call or casting a vote.

And so, I thank you for inviting me, Senator Menendez, to be a part of this hearing today, to be with Harris Wofford, who I have admired immensely for so many years, have worked with him when I sat in the chair, as you point out, of chairing this subcommittee

or being the ranking member for 30 years, from my first days when I sat down at the very end of this table and took over as a member of the committee then, but moving up in the seniority and being deeply involved in this issue of the Western Hemisphere.

So I am delighted to be here in your presence and Senator Rubio's, Johnny Isakson, who I have a great regard for. I worked very closely with during my service here. We did a lot of things together. And his leadership on legislation affecting the Peace Corps as well.

So I will take a few minutes and share some thoughts with you. Having been involved in this organization 45 years ago when, as a 22-year-old graduating from college, applied to the Peace Corps. I didn't know you could be country specific in applying, and the application asked me where I would like to serve. And I remember filling it out, and I said, "I would like to serve anywhere in Africa, Asia, or Latin America." Pretty much the world. I didn't know you could—and they sent me to the Dominican Republic, which was a wonderful, wonderful experience and life-altering. Sort of an epiphany in many ways in my life. To this day, I maintain strong relations with people that I met and worked with during those days.

In fact, I took my two very young children with me last winter back to my village in Benito Moncion in the Dominican Republic. And we spent 2 days with friends that I had made 45 years ago that maintain those relationships. So the lasting effects of the Peace Corps go far beyond your service years, but rather continue.

Anyway, I am glad to be with you today to share some thoughts about this next 50 years, and it is a timely topic, given the anniversary of this remarkable organization and given how much the world has changed since March 1961, when, as Harris has pointed out, President Kennedy signed the Executive order establishing the Peace Corps. It is also an appropriate, I think, time to take stock, as you pointed out in your opening comments, Mr. Chairman, of the challenges facing the organization so it will remain relevant and productive for the next 50 years as well.

So let me say at the outset that I think Aaron Williams is doing a terrific job. We served together as Peace Corps Volunteers in the Dominican Republic. We overlapped. He arrived a year after I was already in the country. We didn't serve together in the same area, but I have known him for a long time and have a great deal of respect for him, and I think he has handled the job tremendously well.

And challenges that have obviously been raised, he and his staff are really doing a fine, fine job in addressing those issues and responding appropriately and quickly to the questions that have been raised, legitimate questions raised about the safety and security of Volunteers and the job that they are doing. But I wanted to begin my comments by publicly expressing my support for him and the staff and the job that they are doing.

I may be slightly biased about Aaron, as I said, because we served together in the Dominican Republic. And like many other Peace Corps Volunteers in 1966, I was fresh out of college and learned on the job with the support of some wonderful families in that small village in the mountains of the Dominican Republic.

Together, we built a school, established a maternity clinic, organized a youth club, among other things.

I believe that these were useful endeavors for the village, and I did some good, I suppose, for those living there during my service. I know that I benefited far beyond I think anything I contributed to that small community from the experience.

And my worldview was forever influenced by my experience as a Volunteer in that small town. It is where I developed my passion for public service, and it is where the seeds of my lifelong interest in Latin America first began.

I have had the privilege of observing the Peace Corps over the past 50 years, a good part of those 50 years, 45 of them, been deeply involved with the organization as a member of this body as well during my 30 years in the Senate. And let me state without reservation that it has been and remains a remarkable organization.

In this city of partisan divides, the Peace Corps has always managed to stay above the fray and enjoy strong bipartisan support. As you heard this morning from Johnny Isakson and certainly I experienced that during my three decades here as well, with great support on both sides of that proverbial aisle. And that is because the organization is at its heart all about Volunteers.

More than 200,000 men and women, as you heard already, have served in 139 countries spanning the globe. And today, more than 9,000 Volunteers are serving in 76 countries. Eighty-five percent of those currently serving are recent college graduates. Eighty-four percent of them are under the age of 30. These demographics are much the same as when I served, with one exception. Today, 60 percent of our Volunteers are women.

Each one of these individuals has served or is serving is mindful of the three goals that have guided the Peace Corps' mission for the last five decades, namely, to help people interested in countries meet their need for trained citizens, to help promote a better understanding of our own country, the Americas, to people all over the globe, and third, to help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

Last year, the Peace Corps submitted a comprehensive agency assessment of the organization to the Congress as mandated by law. And I am proud to have authored that particular provision calling for that assessment. So you could step back and take a look exactly where we are and where we are headed. Probably ought to be done every few years, in my view. Any organization ought to do it, but I am proud of the fact that Peace Corps has moved and taken steps already to not only make the assessment, but then to respond to the assessment, as they have seen it.

Not surprisingly, that assessment reaffirmed the mission of the Peace Corps as articulated by the three goals that I just mentioned. The assessment also outlined six strategies for reforming and strengthening the organization as it looks ahead to the next 50 years.

I would not take issue with any of those strategies, Mr. Chairman. But rather than reiterating those points made which you have already and the staff does, let me share with you some additional areas that I think merit the committee's attention as you

make this assessment about the next 50 years of this organization, as this organization gets underway.

First and foremost, as I stated earlier, the Peace Corps is all about Volunteers. Peace Corps management should never lose sight of that fact. And therefore, this committee should be thinking creatively about how to help the agency maximize the Volunteer experience.

The committee has already acted on legislation in this one critical area, the safety and security of Volunteers. And I commend the committee and Senator Isakson for his leadership on this issue. We tried a year or so ago to get that bill passed, but I am so pleased this committee and the Senate itself as a body has already done that. And I gather the House will pick up the legislation shortly.

When you reported the Katie Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011 on the 26th of July, this legislation is a response, as all of you know, to the tragic murder of one Volunteer and the brutal rape of another. It is intended to encourage and support the steps the agency is taking to respond appropriately and sensitively to the victimized Volunteers and their families.

And as importantly, it mandates preventive measures be taken to protect Volunteers from future incidents as well. And I was pleased to see the Senate, of course, pass the entire bill on the 26th of September.

I know that as part of the committee's deliberations of this legislation, you struggled with the issue of the colocation of Volunteers. I was the only Volunteer in that town of Benito Moncion back in the 1960s. And for that reason, it was a unique experience.

I think my Spanish improved dramatically because I didn't have the opportunity to converse in the evenings with a fellow Volunteer. I learned the customs. I became far more involved in that community for 2 years I think as a result of being the only Volunteer in that community.

But having said that, I think there is many circumstances where colocation makes a great deal of sense, particularly in this day and age and the circumstances under which people are serving. I believe the agency should show flexibility and common sense in this area. It may be particularly appropriate in areas with high crime rates or when the nature of the project being undertaken is larger than any one Volunteer could handle on their own.

The Peace Corps itself has made great strides in protecting Volunteers against sexual assault, and I commend them for that. Under Director Williams, the Peace Corps has issued a set of core principles to ensure that timely and compassionate support is available to victims of sexual assault, as well as guidelines and training for responding promptly and effectively to an incident of sexual assault.

In addition, the Peace Corps has created a Volunteer sexual assault panel made up of outside experts and former Volunteers who were victims themselves of sexual assault in order to provide advice and input to the Peace Corps sexual assault risk reduction and response strategies. And you will hear more about that in the testimony from Director Williams this morning.

All of these efforts are in an attempt to provide greater security and support for that Volunteer, which is the core, obviously, of this

entire discussion. Volunteers are spread throughout the world, and the staff and directors of the Peace Corps must be supported in these efforts to provide better protection and security for the Volunteer.

Another way to improve, I think, Volunteer experience is to institute a formal mechanism for getting feedback from Volunteers and for creating opportunities for future Volunteers to have access to these insights. Volunteers know better than anyone whether a site selection has been a mistake, and many of them have been over the years, whether a project has been poorly thought out, or whether the community really is welcoming of that Volunteer.

They can provide that kind of information, and they ought to be listened to, in my view. They also know whether their country director or their health and security officers are there 24/7 for them, if needed. This is all useful information that headquarters should be sifting through and paying attention to.

I attempted to tackle this and several other insights in the legislation that Johnny Isakson and I worked on together in 2007 with the Peace Corps Volunteer Empowerment Act. Unfortunately, the bill never became law, as you heard earlier today from Johnny.

But I would encourage us to look at those provisions. Some of them can be just implemented. You don't need laws to do them. They have the power, in my view, to implement a lot of these ideas without legislation.

There has also been a debate over time as to how large the corps of Volunteers should be. Sarge Shriver was always rather expansive in his description of the size of the Peace Corps Program.

President Bush called for doubling the number of Volunteers to 14,000 a few years ago. I was supportive of his call for a larger Peace Corps at the time, with a caveat, Mr. Chairman, that, first and foremost, the agency must ensure that the Volunteer experience wouldn't be diminished in the process. And that always ought to be central.

So any increase in size must keep in mind these provisions about providing that Volunteer with the safety, the security, and the support they need. Just expanding the numbers without doing that, in my view, would be a tragedy, and welcoming a tragedy to occur in too many instances. But I certainly would like to see the numbers increased. But to increase them, you have got to provide that support as well.

The number of Volunteers has grown modestly over the past 9 years, but it certainly did not double, as we all know. It was in part, obviously, resource questions, which you are, obviously, grappling with today again as well. In part, it was an enormous undertaking to screen more Volunteers, sign on new countries, and identify additional sites for Volunteer placements as well. All of those factors have contributed to that result.

In light of the serious Federal deficit and mounting Federal debt, it may be unrealistic to believe that you will be able to find the resources to support such an expansion for the foreseeable future. Now your energy may be better spent maintaining funding levels to support the 9,000-plus Volunteers that are currently serving.

Since the Peace Corps opened its doors, there has also been a debate about the so-called 5-year rule, which places term limits on

Peace Corps management and staff. The purpose of that rule has always been to keep the organization infused with fresh ideas. I, for one, have supported this policy over the past 45 years because it also reinforces the concept that the organization is about the Volunteers and not about management or staying on a job for a career in the Peace Corps.

Certainly, there needs to be flexibility in certain areas, such as health and security, where experience is absolutely critical. But I believe the director has sufficient discretion to respond to specific requirements as they arise while still preserving the spirit of the 5-year rule.

The Peace Corps has done a very good job, in my view, of fulfilling its first and second goals. Where it has done less well over the years, I would point out, is with respect to the third goal that was outlined back 50 years ago, namely, promoting a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

There is, of course, the Paul Coverdell World Wise School. Paul, obviously, is a former colleague of ours and was Peace Corps director, and I strongly supported his nomination at the time that he was nominated for that position. And naming this organization, this program for him I thought made wonderful sense.

But the resource allocated to that program and other third-goal initiatives have been minuscule over the years, Mr. Chairman. In FY 2010, the Peace Corps received an appropriation of \$400 million. Of that, \$1.8 million was spent on the third-goal activities.

Many of the third goal activities are being undertaken by returned Volunteers on their own, with little or no support from the agency. Clearly, there are cost-effective ways to harness the experience and energy of the 200,000 alumni of Returned Volunteers. Many of them are eager to give back to their communities, to share their experiences as Volunteers, as witnessed by the turnout of some 5,000 or 6,000 that I had the privilege of addressing in the amphitheater of the Arlington Cemetery on that Sunday that Harris and Kevin and, of course, Aaron were all part of that program where we recognized and memorialized the 300 Volunteers who lost their lives during service as Volunteers.

But again, that 5,000, if you had asked them that day to get up and do something in Washington, DC, I guarantee you, 95 percent of them would have joined not in the march just with the flags going down toward the Lincoln Memorial, but would have been delighted to be asked once again to Volunteer to do something on behalf of their country.

The Peace Corps needs to devote, I think, more thinking and resources to enable more Americans to learn about the world and about public service from those who served as Volunteers and have returned to their communities.

And finally, let me just say a word or two, if I can, about the Peace Corps Response Program. Formally established as the Crisis Corps during the Clinton administration, this was a very creative way to harness the skills of former Peace Corps Volunteers to assist on a short-term basis in providing emergency, humanitarian, and reconstruction assistance at the community level in the aftermath of natural disasters.

And while Peace Corps Response Volunteers are generally deployed overseas, they were deployed domestically as well in 2005 to assist in the relief efforts associated with Hurricane Katrina. And this committee should encourage, in my view, the agency to continue to build its roster of returned Volunteers who can be called upon and who would be delighted to be asked when disaster strikes to put their skills and that determination to do something, to be a part of something larger than themselves to better mankind.

With those thoughts, Mr. Chairman, again, I can't tell you what an honor it was to be asked to come back up to this room, which holds many, many fond and cherished memories, and I thank you.

[The prepared statement of Senator Dodd follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER J. DODD

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee thank you for inviting me to share my thoughts on a subject matter near and dear to my heart—the Peace Corps. This is certainly an opportune time for the committee to reflect on the record of the Peace Corps, as it celebrates 50 years of public service by its Volunteers. Given how much the world has changed since March, 1, 1961, when President Kennedy signed the Executive order establishing the Peace Corps, it is also an appropriate time to take stock of any challenges facing the organization so it will remain relevant and productive for the next 50 years.

Let me say at the outset that I think Aaron William, the current Peace Corps Director, is doing a fine job and is the right person to lead the organization into its next 50 years. I may be slightly biased about Aaron as his service in the Peace Corps overlapped mine in the Dominican Republic. As many of you know, I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer back in the days when I still had dark hair. Like many other Peace Corps Volunteers, I was fresh out of college and learned on the job with the support of the wonderful families in my village of Benito Monción. Together we built a school, established a maternity clinic, and organized a youth clinic. I believe that these were useful endeavors for the village and that I did some good for those living there during my service. I know that I benefited enormously from the experience and my worldview was forever after influenced by my experience as a Volunteer. It is where I developed my passion for public service and it is where the seeds of my lifelong interest in Latin America first began.

I have had the privilege of observing, up close, the Peace Corps over the majority of its first 50 years. I have been deeply involved with the Peace Corps for 45 of the 50 years since its creation. And let me state without reservation that it has been and remains a remarkable organization. In this city of partisan divides, the Peace Corps has always managed to stay above the fray and enjoy strong bipartisan support, and that is because the organization is at its heart all about the Volunteers. More than 200,000 men and women have served in 139 countries spanning the globe. Today more than 9,000 Volunteers are serving in 76 countries. Eighty-five percent of those currently serving are recent college graduates and 84 percent of them are under the age of 30. These demographics are much the same as when I served, with one exception: today 60 percent of our Volunteers are women. Each one of these individuals has served or is serving, mindful of the three goals that have guided the Peace Corps' mission for the last five decades, namely to help people in interested countries meet their need for trained citizens; to help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the people served; and to help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

Last year the Peace Corps submitted a comprehensive agency assessment of the organization to the Congress as mandated by law. Not surprisingly that assessment reaffirmed the mission of the Peace Corps as articulated by the three goals that have served it so well. The assessment also outlined six strategies for reforming and strengthening the organization as it looks ahead to the next 50 years. I would not take issue with any of these strategies. But rather than reiterating the points made in the agency's assessment, let me share with you some additional areas that merit the committee's attention as the next 50 years of the organization gets underway.

First and foremost as I stated earlier—the Peace Corps is all about the Volunteers. Peace Corps management should never lose sight of that fact. And therefore this committee should be thinking creatively about how to help the agency to maximize the volunteer experience.

The committee has already acted on legislation in one critical area—the safety and security of the Volunteers—when it reported the Kate Puze Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011 on July 26 of this year. This legislation is in response to the tragic murder of one Volunteer and the brutal rape of another. It is intended to encourage and support the steps the agency is taking to respond appropriately and sensitively to victimized Volunteers and their families. As importantly, it mandates preventative measures be taken to protect Volunteers from future incidents. I was pleased to see the Senate pass this bill on September 26, and hope the House will quickly follow suit.

I know that as part of the committee's deliberations of this legislation you struggled with the issue of the colocation of Volunteers. I was the only Volunteer in my community and for that reason it was a unique experience. But having said that I think there may be circumstances when colocation makes sense. I believe the agency should show flexibility and common sense in this area. It may be particularly appropriate in areas with high crime rates or when the nature of the project being undertaken is larger than one Volunteer can handle.

The Peace Corps itself has made great strides in protecting Volunteers against sexual assault. Under Director Williams, the Peace Corps has issued a set of core principles to ensure that timely and compassionate support is available to victims of sexual assault as well as guidelines and training for responding promptly and effectively to an incident of sexual assault. In addition, the Peace Corps has created a Volunteer sexual assault panel made up of outside experts and former Volunteers who were victims of sexual assault in order to provide advice and input on Peace Corps' sexual assault risk reduction and response strategies. All of these efforts are in an attempt to provide greater security and support to the Volunteers spread throughout the world and the staff and directors of the Peace Corps must be supported in these efforts.

Another way to improve the Volunteer experience is to institute a formal mechanism for getting feedback from Volunteers and for creating opportunities for future Volunteers to have access to those insights. Volunteers know better than anyone whether a site selection has been a mistake, whether a project has been poorly thought out, or whether a community really is welcoming of the Volunteer. They also know whether their country director or their health and security officers are their 24/7 for them, if needed. This is all useful information that headquarters should be shifting through and paying attention to. I attempted to tackle this and several other issues legislatively in 2007 with the Peace Corps Volunteer Empowerment Act. Unfortunately the bill never became law.

There has also been debate over time about how large the corps of Volunteers should be. President George W. Bush called for doubling the numbers of Volunteers to 14,000 over a 5-year period. I was supportive of President Bush's call for a larger Peace Corps with the caveat that first and foremost the agency must ensure that Volunteer experience wouldn't be diminished in the process. The number of Volunteers has grown modestly over the last 9 years but it certainly did not double in size. In part it was a resources question. In part it was an enormous undertaking to screen more Volunteers, sign on new countries and identify additional sites for Volunteer placements.

In light of the serious federal deficit and mounting federal debt, it may be unrealistic to believe that you will be able to find the resources to support such an expansion for the foreseeable future. Your energy may be better spent maintaining funding levels to support the 9,000 plus Volunteers that are currently serving.

Since the Peace Corps opened its doors there has also been a debate about the so called 5-year rule, which places term limits on Peace Corps management and staff. The purpose of the rule has always been to keep the organization infused with fresh eyes and ideas. I for one have supported this policy because it also reinforces the concept that the organization is about the Volunteers and not about management. Certainly there needs to be flexibility in certain areas, such as health and security where experience is critical. I believe the director has sufficient discretion to respond to specific requirements as they arise while still preserving the spirit of the 5-year rule.

The Peace Corps has done a very good job of fulfilling its first and second goals. Where it has done less well is with respect to the third goal, namely promoting a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans. Yes, there is the Paul Coverdell World Wise School program. But the resources allocated to that program and other third-goal activities are miniscule. In FY 2010 the Peace Corps received appropriations of \$400 million. Of that amount \$1.8 million was spent on third-goal activities. Many of the third-goal activities are being undertaken by returned Volunteers—on their own and with little or no support from the agency. Clearly there are cost-effective ways to harness the experiences and energy of the

200,000 alumni of returned Volunteers. Many of them are eager to give back to their communities and to share their experiences as Volunteers. The Peace Corps needs to devote more thinking and resources to enable more Americans to learn about the world and about public service from those who served as Volunteers and have returned to their communities.

Finally, let me say a few words about the Peace Corps Response Program—formerly established as the Crisis Corps during the Clinton administration. This was a very creative way to harness the skills of former Peace Corps Volunteers to assist on a short-term basis in providing emergency, humanitarian, and reconstruction assistance at the community level in the aftermath of natural disasters. While Peace Corps Response Volunteers are generally deployed overseas, they were deployed domestically in 2005 to assist in the relief effort associated with Hurricane Katrina. This committee should encourage the agency to continue to build its roster of returned Volunteers who can be called upon when disaster strikes to put their skills to work for the betterment of mankind.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for inviting me to participate in this very important hearing. I look forward to responding to any of your questions.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, thank you, Senator Dodd. Thank you both for your insights and your service.

And I know we normally don't ask questions of members or former members, but I am going to violate that rule and take advantage of your expertise.

I heard your comments about Director Williams, and I take them to heart. I have a broader question that goes beyond Director Williams, and that is do you believe that there is a culture in the Peace Corps such that particularly those who lead it understand, incorporate, and act upon the very essence of the value of Volunteers and their insights, or is that something that needs to be further legislated in order for it to be guaranteed?

Senator DODD. Well, as I say, having sat in the chair you are in and watched it, I can't comment specifically on individuals. But my experience has been, like Senator Isakson, as a person who traveled obviously extensively through the Americas, but also around the world, I always made it a point to meet with Volunteers.

I always found it to be not just something that was nice to do as a former Volunteer. Kind of an interesting perspective from a country. It isn't a highly sophisticated view, necessarily, but rather, a different point of view you get.

And as a result of that, I come away, at least—and there may be exceptions to this—that Volunteers in many ways reflect, I think, the leadership, either the country director or the staffs, at both a country and a regional level. And in the years that I traveled, going back, I always witnessed people deeply committed to that culture of service, of Volunteering, of trying to make a difference.

I always had a sense there was support. I always asked them, by the way, was there anything I need to know about how this is working, how you are being supported? Is the Peace Corps doing its job? I would be hard pressed to cite an example, Mr. Chairman, over the years where a Volunteer, who never was shy about expressing themselves on any number of matters, took the opportunity to say we have a major problem. We have a problem here. We are not getting the level of support that we believe we ought to be getting.

So my answer to your question is—based on what I know and my experience, limited as it may be, in that area—that the answer would be, yes, they do support it, that culture. And again, there are

obviously examples where exceptions have occurred to that, but overall.

In fact, I think it was interesting that even the Volunteers who testified recently about the difficulties, when asked the question—that received a lot of notoriety, as it should have. But when they were also asked what their general impression as a Peace Corps Volunteer is, they all had tremendously positive things to say about their experience as Peace Corps Volunteers. Even though they had gone through very trying and difficult circumstances, the latter comments didn't receive the notoriety that the initial comments did, for the obvious reasons.

But I think it is worthy of note that the very same Volunteers who raised criticisms also expressed a deep commitment to the Peace Corps and its service and the job that it has done.

Senator WOFFORD. I don't disagree with anything that Chris Dodd just—I agree with what Chris has just said. I would like to add that I have, over the years, been with the Peace Corps in many countries on visits. Like Senator Isakson, I make a point to it when I go in those countries.

I find both the Peace Corps Volunteers who are there now and the staff, on balance, very much like it was in the days of Sargent Shriver. The culture that got started by Shriver and Kennedy and all of us crazy people who started it in 1961 is very strong.

The 5-year rule is not just a turnover. It was called "Shriver in, up, and out." And it was called "the 5-year flush." But the purpose of it was new blood, but it was linked to a policy there would be high priority in appointment of all jobs to returned Peace Corps Volunteers, and our excellent, and I think outstanding, director, Aaron Williams, now has the top three people in the agency with him—Returned Volunteers.

They pervade most of the country staffs. The leadership of those country programs, of course, varies as the ambassadors from the United States of the other kind vary. I can't, obviously, speak for—how many countries are we in now?—77 countries, not at all. But a lot of people say, oh, the old days of those first pioneers in the Peace Corps, that was the golden time.

For the Volunteers who are there now, it is their golden time, and I find them very much like them. And like our day, some of the country directors disappoint you, but I think there is outstanding leadership in the country directors. So I am optimistic about the Peace Corps' ability to meet the challenge of a 21st century very different world.

Senator MENENDEZ. I have no doubt about the Volunteers themselves. My question was to whether there is a culture within the organization that does the very essence of what you have suggested, Senator Dodd, that listens to Volunteers, responds to them, and incorporates their ideas in order to make the Peace Corps better? And that in the context, for example of security, was it as responsive as it should have been.

I have no doubt about the Volunteers being the type that would say what is on their mind and let it be known. I am just wondering whether there is a culture at the organization that actually incorporates those ideals.

With that, let me recognize Senator Rubio.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MARCO RUBIO,
U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA**

Senator RUBIO. Thank you. And I didn't know there was a rule we couldn't ask former members for comments. And so, that is good to know when I come back one day. [Laughter.]

I need to put that in here.

Senator DODD. I was going to ask about that rule myself.

Senator RUBIO. Oh, good. Well, actually, I had hoped to engage you in a quick conversation about this.

Senator DODD. Yes.

Senator RUBIO. I will actually waive most of my opening statement, there is just a couple of things I want to point out. The first is I am very proud of the fact that my alma mater, the University of Florida, ranks No. 2 in the country as a fertile ground for recruiting Peace Corps Volunteers, and I think that is something we Gators are very proud of.

I am a believer in the Peace Corps. I am a believer in that Americans engaged internationally is positive for our country, positive for our future, and positive for the world. I know we are having a debate right now about what America's role in the world should be, and there are some voices in America that are asking us to look inward. And we certainly have serious problems we have to solve here, but I hope we never underestimate the power of people all over the world having access to a free people with the diversity of people that we are able to offer and the idealism at a time that I think we have an extraordinary perfect storm.

We have what I believe in this generation of younger Americans, one of the most idealistic, service-oriented, community-oriented, collaboration-oriented young Americans perhaps in the history of our country. It is amazing to watch 16-, 17-, 18-, 19-year-olds come together on social networks behind causes and ideas, and I think that bears great opportunity for our future.

Likewise, I think we have this extraordinary talent wealth in our Nation of people that are reaching retirement, but are extremely active, healthy, and capable of serving for years to come. In fact, maybe repeat Volunteers who maybe served in the 1970s and 1980s who are now part of the famous baby boom generation who now are going to retire, but really have many, many years of productivity ahead of them.

And so, my question really in terms of engaging is two things. No. 1: What opportunities lie in those two things?

And in particular, I don't believe the Peace Corps should be an arm of American foreign policy. It is obviously to serve. How much coordination there is between the Peace Corps and America's foreign policy interests and where America needs to be engaged?

Clearly, there is an environment of limited resources, and there will always be limited resources. There are areas that are going to give you higher returns per Volunteer. I don't know how much of that has been discussed, but certainly, there are areas where I think we can get a higher rate of return on our investment from a foreign policy perspective. I am not sure that is a bad thing or in any way counter to the overall mission of the Peace Corps.

Senator DODD. Well, a great observation. I note here I look at numbers of next to California, and Florida has second—I think the

second-largest number of Volunteers serving today in the country. I am looking at a number here, Senator, 324 Volunteers from Florida that are actively involved in the Peace Corps.

I just agree with your comments. I think we are looking at a generation of people who want to serve, and that is evidenced by the number of applications the Peace Corps gets. I will let the staff give you the exact numbers, but I think the numbers are as high up. I don't think they are a reflection necessarily of the economic times we are in. I think they have been rather consistent, that desire to be a part of this, not just this organization, but to give back I think is evidenced not only by application to the Peace Corps, but AmeriCorps, and a variety of other opportunities that are around today for people to step up and serve.

I also think it is worthwhile to talk about older Americans. This head of gray hair makes me more sensitive to the subject as time goes on. But I think we are missing an opportunity. I mentioned statistically the number of people who are under the age of 30 in the Peace Corps, about 80-some odd percent. Is it 84, 85 percent? And I think it is worthwhile to be going out and attracting.

One of the things I have raised when I was sitting in the chairman's chair was the health examinations and criteria, and they are rather stringent, and I understand why. But if you are going to make the same standards apply to a 22-year-old as you do to a 65-year-old, obviously, you are going to have a very few number of people who qualify.

I am not suggesting we ought to become lax in that regard, but I think we are missing an opportunity to have older Americans who either have served or would want to serve, who bring a wealth of experience. And not to malign younger people, but there is nothing like someone who has actually had a lifetime of experience in certain areas to be able to provide that service along the way.

And third, on your point about where the Peace Corps serves, and again, I think this is extremely worthwhile to talk about. And again, you have got to be careful. Obviously, the world we live in today poses a lot more dangers and hazards than we did back 40 years ago. And I think it is really worthwhile, though, that we begin to focus.

Now correct me if I am wrong here, again, but I think in the Arab world, is that correct, we have only two programs, Morocco and Jordan. I tried for years to get Egypt to consider having the Peace Corps. I was never able to actually convince them to move in that direction, but we ought to, in my view.

And we ought to be reaching into those areas where exactly the kind of job the Peace Corps has done over the years, giving other people an opportunity to discover who we are through those Volunteers I think would be tremendously valuable. It shouldn't be part of short-term foreign policy. That has always been the goal.

I recall in the Dominican Republic, in fact, in 1965, when President Johnson put the Boxer off the coast of Santo Domingo, the entire American delegation was asked to leave the country except the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps had already in a few short years had established a reputation of being involved in things other than foreign policy. I know that doesn't get repeated all the time, but it

was worthy of note in a way that we are not seen as part of that foreign policy goal.

The broader context I think is exactly what John Kennedy talked about in his speech in the Cow Palace, by the way, as being a part of the overall image of the United States. He wanted it so enhanced as a result of a Peace Corps program.

So, in a larger context, it is. It is just the day-to-day context, I think it is wise to keep it out of it. Too often you get yourselves in a situation that would cause, I think, damage to the Peace Corps and the mission which it was designed to fulfill, but I think your three points are excellent ones.

Senator WOFFORD. Senator Rubio, I would like to comment on the question of the Peace Corps and its contribution to foreign policy. The Secretary of State Dean Rusk put it very well, and the President endorsed it, and Sargent Shriver endorsed it. The Peace Corps will contribute to American foreign policy to the extent that it is not seen as an instrument of American foreign policy.

Now I agree with your concern that there are countries of great power and importance in the world where we don't have Peace Corps Volunteers now, and I personally would want not just in terms of winning their support at all in foreign policy, but Peace Corps should be in those countries.

We are only minimally in China, and there may be ways that, you know, they want tens of thousands of English teachers in China, that there is a larger role the Peace Corps can play in China. But India, Brazil, there are a number of countries that I would love to see the Peace Corps go, and I think it should be a priority.

Now the matter of older Volunteers is close to my heart, my heart being, having been beating for 85 years. Sargent Shriver, from the very beginning tried—well, first place, decided that despite the origin in which it was sensed as a youth corps almost, in fact, the first version of a Peace Corps was called the Point Four Youth Corps, "Point Four" being Truman's fourth point of special assistance to developing countries.

Shriver from the beginning said, no, that is wrong. It should be for all ages. And he tried very hard, since more than half of the first Peace Corps Volunteers were in teaching, in formal teaching roles, 90 percent in Africa were in secondary schools of Africa. We doubled the number of secondary school teachers with the 400 that we had in Ethiopia in 1962, 1963, and 1964. It enabled their university to grow and everything else.

But they were—he tried hard. He had been school board chair, president in Chicago. He went to the teachers associations to recruit experienced teachers. Now we had about 20 over 50 and some over 60 in the 400 Peace Corps in Ethiopia. Experienced teachers played a major leavening role or mentoring role to the BA generalists that were the recent college graduates.

So I would personally put—and the Peace Corps has begun in recent years, even before the great Aaron Williams Peace Corps 50-plus recruiting effort to get more, I think it is not much more than 10 percent who are older Americans. I think a major problem now for older Americans is the 2-year rule.

In the report that Kevin Quigley is going to put in the record, "A Call To Peace," this remarkable survey that Peter Hart did, the Volunteers say, no, stick by the gold standard of the 2-year rule. There is something very important to that. But they also said there should be other channels of Volunteer service that could be 1 year or 9 months, and some of us who have been involved with this are urging that Congress develop a shorter term Volunteers system that would be parallel to the Peace Corps, perhaps a track of the Peace Corps.

The Volunteers here said we want that, and a lot of them would like to go in themselves, now that they are 60 and 65 themselves. So I would welcome your interest in keeping the Peace Corps on the track of a much larger proportion being experienced.

And let me add that the one area where the Volunteers felt they weren't making as much a contribution as they did in mutual understanding was in providing skilled manpower to help developing nations meet their human needs. And that the older Americans would be able, 1 year or less term, be able to come in much larger numbers with the kind of experience that could improve the impact of the Peace Corps in other countries.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I am so pleased to be able to welcome back Senator Dodd and Senator Wofford, former Senators. It is very nice to have you both here.

And Senator Rubio, I know you don't remember this, but Jimmy Carter, when he campaigned for President, talked about his mother, Miss Lillian, who, as an older woman, went into the Peace Corps. And I think that probably did as much as anything to recruit older adults into the Peace Corps. So we need somebody high profile to talk again about going into the Peace Corps at an older age.

I would point out since, Harris, you are here, the expansion of AmeriCorps does provide an opportunity for a lot of older Americans to serve here at home. So I know we are here to talk about the Peace Corps, but I thought it was worth raising that.

Senator Dodd, I had the opportunity this summer to go to a reunion of former Peace Corps Volunteers in Stoddard, NH, a small town in the western part of our State. And there were Volunteers there who had served from the very first days of the Peace Corps to someone who had just come back, I think, about a year ago.

And there were two things that struck me about talking to them. One was everyone there talked about that experience as a life-changing experience, something that they would keep with them. It was transformational in what they have done with their lives.

But the other thing was the issue that you raised, which is now that they are back, now that they have had that experience, they feel like they want to recapture and serve in some other way. So I wondered, as you have been thinking about this issue, if you had any—you talked about reactivating people to serve in disasters like Katrina. But do you have any thoughts about whether we should try and create an official structure to do that, or are there any

other ways in which we can encourage those former Peace Corps Volunteers to continue to serve the country?

Senator DODD. Well, I mentioned the Paul Coverdell World Wise group, and again, I say respectfully because I know Aaron Williams and the staff trying to allocate resources are difficult. I mean, the budget, what is it now, \$375 million, I think, is when you think of it, in comparison, I know this gets often cited. Actually, the appropriations for the military bands is about the same budget as that of the Peace Corps.

That is not to suggest it is not worthy of the appropriation of military bands, but just to put it in perspective of the 9,000 Volunteers and the staffs, to operate all of that, roughly operate in the same kind of a budget.

And so, when I mentioned earlier the \$1.8 million that has been allocated to deal with the World Wise Program and regretting that it is such a small percent of resources. But it is a place where you could start to examine exactly how to fulfill that third goal, the one of making Americans more aware of the world in which we live. And I think that is very valuable.

I think what Senator Rubio said a minute ago is worthwhile. Obviously, you have got constraints, and you are going through that difficult time up here to allocate resources. But it also is a critical time, and with the opportunities today and the tensions around the world that we are dealing with, not to close the doors, not to take advantage of these returned Volunteers as part of the educational process of a nation that has depended upon its role in the world to succeed in so many different ways.

So that is an area to me that ought to be examined further, and how you could activate and utilize these Volunteers in school systems to talk about their experiences. It is not talking about providing an income for them, but merely the opportunity to do it.

Senator SHAHEEN. Right.

Senator DODD. I think you would find a very excited organization. One of the Volunteers—we always said one of the difficulties coming back, adjusting in the first instance, it was obviously awkward. All of a sudden, I was literally dropped off in those days in the Peace Corps.

I was driven in a van and dropped in this town with a bunk bed and a trunk, and then they drove off. I had no idea where I was. No one introduced me. Things have changed since the 1960s on how they leave you in a place. But obviously, I survived.

But people have said to me, well, that must have been very difficult—

Senator MENENDEZ. Now I understand so much about you. [Laughter.]

Senator DODD. Thank you. I should have told you that years ago, Bob.

But the more difficult adjustment in many ways was coming back. I came back on Christmas Eve 1968, and 1968, you probably could have left 20 years earlier. That year, obviously, with the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy, the strife in our cities, was a very tough year. You had the Tet Offensive in Vietnam. The war was raging. The opposition was growing.

But readjustment in many ways was almost harder than adjusting to this community in the Dominican Republic. And you will hear that from Volunteers. And part of it is they want to talk about this experience. They want to share the insights, what they learned, where they lived.

And I think, again, it doesn't take much to provide those opportunities and to connect in an educational setting, particularly in the elementary, middle schools, and high schools, with those returned Volunteers, the 200,000 of us spread all across this country. To have people who could work in that area alone, I think we would find a very willing constituency, such as you ran into in New Hampshire last summer.

I don't know, Harris, if you have got any thoughts on that at all?

Senator WOFFORD. I am agreeing with you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Let me just—I don't have any other questions, but I wanted to pick up on the resource concern that you raise. And obviously, it is something that we are all thinking a lot about.

But I think if we did a cost-benefit analysis on the goodwill that is produced by Peace Corps Volunteers and compared that against money that is spent in lots of other ways on American foreign policy, that there is no doubt that money invested in the Peace Corps has a significant return that is well worth the investment that we are putting in.

Senator DODD. No question about—just again, the world has changed today. Here I was back in my village, and I picked up my cell phone and I dialed my family. And in 1966, 1967, and 1968, I got letters from family. It was usually about a week, 2 weeks after they had sent them. But I had no ability to communicate.

Senator Rubio pointed out today with the social networking and media that is available, today it is remarkable how much communication can occur with Volunteers and their opportunity to be heard. So I, for one, would like to see us take advantage of those resources and this technology that allows greater communication to be able to do a better job. But we thank you for your support.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, with the thanks of the committee to both of you for your incredible insights, we appreciate you being here. We appreciate your service, and we look forward to continuing to engage with you in the days ahead.

Senator DODD. Well, thank you, Senator, very much. Thank you again, and thank you for the work you are doing and the committee is doing and your support of the Peace Corps.

And I know these are tough choices to have to make, but it is heartening to know that there is still that spirit of bipartisan support of this organization at a time when that seems to be harder to find on matters, that this is still an area.

You know, the directors over the years, one of the best directors we ever had was Loret Ruppe, whose husband was a Congressman from, what was it, Wisconsin? Michigan. Loret had the job—of course, she passed away a number of years ago. But President Reagan nominated her, and she was remarkable.

I remember those years because a lot of our budget debates in those years, it was the one area in every single year of the Reagan administration, President Reagan supported an increase in the

budget of the Peace Corps. I think the only agency in Government that had that unique distinction during the 8 years of his Presidency, and a lot had to do with Loret being such a great advocate at the time, but also to President Reagan's great credit, saw the value of this organization in ways that certainly enhanced I think not only the organization, but the job that they were doing around the globe.

So we thank you.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, thank you both.

And with that, let me call up the present director of the Peace Corps, Aaron S. Williams. He is the 18th director of the Peace Corps. He served as a Peace Corps Volunteer from 1967 to 1970, first in a training program for rural school teachers, as has been said, in the Dominican Republic, and then as a professor of teaching methods at the university.

He later went on to become the coordinator of minority recruitment and project evaluation officer of the Peace Corps in Chicago, attained the rank of career minister in the U.S. Senior Foreign Service at the U.S. Agency for International Development and was USAID's mission director in South Africa.

We look forward to your testimony. Mr. Director, we ask you to limit your remarks to about 5 minutes. Your full statement will be included for the record, and then we will have a discussion with you after that.

**STATEMENT OF HON. AARON WILLIAMS, DIRECTOR,
PEACE CORPS, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. WILLIAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Rubio, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

This is really an exciting time for the Peace Corps. As you know, we marked our 50th anniversary this year, and we have put in place sweeping reforms of policies, procedures, and practices to make certain that this remarkable agency and our outstanding Volunteers thrive for the next 50 years.

The Peace Corps was founded in 1961 to promote progress and build bridges between Americans and peoples overseas. Fifty years later, our mission is not only still relevant, it is even more important in an increasingly complex world. From combating HIV/AIDS to serving as America's most effective grassroots ambassadors, Volunteers are doing essential work for our country.

When I became director, I ordered my team to do a top-to-bottom review of agency operations. The result is the comprehensive agency assessment the Peace Corps submitted to Congress last year. The assessment is our blueprint for reform. It lays out a vision for the agency, a vision which states that the Peace Corps will be a leader in partnership with others in the global effort to further human progress and foster understanding and respect among people.

In order to achieve this vision, the assessment put forth a six-part strategy that we are busy implementing. We have put in place a new objective and an evidence-based approach to deciding where we operate and how we allocate Volunteers. This process, called the country portfolio review, represents a significant step forward.

We are strengthening the technical assistance we provide around the world by focusing on and scaling up a limited number of highly effective projects. We are putting in place a streamlined, state-of-the-art process to recruit, select, and place our Volunteers. And we intend to increase opportunities for Americans who have highly specialized skills and significant work experience, but who might not be able to make a 2-year commitment.

We are expanding our efforts to advance what we at Peace Corps call the third goal, bringing home the rich experience of a Peace Corps Volunteer to help Americans to better understand the nations of the world. And we are systematically strengthening management operations through updated technology, innovative approaches, and improved business processes.

Our most important reforms lie in the area of Volunteer safety and support. Nothing is more important to me, as director of the Peace Corps and also as a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer who I might say had his life transformed by my service in the Peace Corps. Nothing is more important to me, Mr. Chairman, than the health, safety, and security of every member of our Peace Corps extended family.

Peace Corps Volunteers represent the best America has to offer, and we owe them the very best that we can provide. Since I became director 2 years ago, it has become apparent to me that the Peace Corps has not always been sufficiently responsive or sensitive to victims of crime and their families. I sincerely regret that. This is not Peace Corps policy. This is not the Peace Corps way.

Over the past 2 years, we have put in place new policies to minimize the risks faced by Volunteers and to improve the way we respond to victims of crime. While the Peace Corps cannot eliminate every risk Volunteers may face during their service, I am committed to making sure that we do everything we can to protect Volunteers and provide effective, compassionate support to them and their families when a tragedy does occur.

We hired a nationally recognized leader in victims' rights to serve as the agency's first victim advocate. Her name is Kellie Greene, and Kellie is here with me today. She works hard every day to provide emotional, medical, legal, and other support to Volunteers who are victims of crime.

We also issued Peace Corps' commitment to sexual assault victims, which makes clear that all Volunteers must be treated with dignity and respect, and we implemented new guidelines for responding to rape and sexual assault that detail our victim-centered approach to incidents.

We are already rolling out our new standardized and comprehensive training for Volunteers on sexual assault risk reduction and response. And we signed a very important memorandum of understanding with the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network, RAINN, the Nation's largest antisexual violence organization, to collaborate and share resources on sexual assault prevention and response.

RAINN also serves on our new Peace Corps Volunteer sexual assault panel made up of outside experts, which includes, by the way, I might add, Mr. Chairman, representatives from DOD, the U.S. Army, the Department of Justice, and NGOs with experience

in this field. They are all helping to make sure that our policies are based on the best practices.

I welcome efforts in Congress to codify the reforms we have put in place, and I want to especially thank Senator Johnny Isakson and Senator Barbara Boxer for working so hard to ensure that all Volunteers, particularly victims of sexual assault, receive the support and services they need. Your commitment to the agency and to our Volunteers is truly inspiring, and your legislation is a fitting tribute to Kate Puzey, an outstanding young woman, a Volunteer who was killed tragically while serving in 2009.

I am deeply grateful to Peace Corps Volunteers for their dedication and service, and I am committed to doing all that I can as director of the Peace Corps to protect and support them. I know that the members of the subcommittee share this goal, and I look forward to working with you and others to ensure the continued success of this wonderful agency, our beloved agency, the Peace Corps, and the remarkable Volunteers who serve around the world.

And in closing, also, Mr. Chairman, let me also thank the first speakers today, Senator Chris Dodd and Senator Harris Wofford, who, of course, have a long, distinguished history of service to the Peace Corps and to our Nation. I appreciate their remarks.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Williams follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AARON S. WILLIAMS

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Rubio, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. This is an exciting time at the Peace Corps as we draw on 50 years of lessons learned and put in place new measures to ensure the agency and our outstanding Volunteers continue to thrive for decades to come. I am pleased to have the opportunity to tell you about the work we are doing to strengthen and reform all aspects of agency operations, and in particular our efforts to better protect the health, safety, and security of our Volunteers, who are the heart of Peace Corps.

THE MISSION OF THE PEACE CORPS

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy launched an innovative program to spearhead progress in developing countries and to promote friendship between the American people and peoples overseas. From its start, the Peace Corps had three goals: to help countries meet their need for trained men and women; to promote a better understanding of Americans overseas; and to promote a better understanding of foreign peoples and cultures here at home. Fifty years later, the agency's mission and goals are not only still relevant, they are more important than ever in an increasingly complex world.

The Peace Corps achieves its goals by recruiting and training some of the most talented and dedicated people our country has to offer. They work in six different sectors—agriculture, business development, education, environment, health and HIV/AIDS, and youth development—and serve in 76 countries, from Central America to Africa, from the Middle East to Asia, and from Eastern Europe to the islands of the Pacific.

Currently, more than 9,000 Americans, ranging in age from their twenties to their eighties, and from all 50 States, are serving as Peace Corps Volunteers. We deeply appreciate their willingness to leave the comforts of home to serve our country in some of the least developed and most challenging areas of the world. The work is often demanding, and the pay is minimal, but these patriotic Americans do incredible work, whether they are teaching English, training entrepreneurs, or promoting sustainable farming practices. In the words of President Reagan, "Nowhere has the proud American tradition of voluntarism been better illustrated than through the Peace Corps."

There are other foreign aid agencies and programs in the Federal Government, but the Peace Corps is unique. Volunteers spend 27 months living and working in areas that other programs are often unable to reach. During their service, Volunteers do not just work with the community—they become part of it. They eat the

same food, live in the same kind of housing, speak the same language and use the same transportation as other members of the community. By doing so, they build mutual trust and respect, and they are able to advance the development needs of the host country more effectively, while demonstrating American values of hard work, compassion, and commitment.

Volunteers target some of the most debilitating diseases around the world. For example, they play a key role in our country's global response to HIV/AIDS, promoting behavior change and sustainable, culturally appropriate solutions to the pandemic. By mobilizing isolated communities and helping orphans and vulnerable children, Volunteers turn hope into action. Volunteers are also taking on the fight against malaria. Through education about malaria and the distribution of mosquito nets, Volunteers are combating a leading cause of death and disease in many developing countries. In all their work, Volunteers represent our country's highest values and ideals.

Peace Corps Volunteers also serve as America's most effective grassroots ambassadors. By building person-to-person connections, they help to dispel misperceptions about the United States and to counter anti-American sentiment in areas of the world that may have little direct exposure to Americans. That is one reason why, throughout its history, across different Congresses and administrations, the Peace Corps has received strong bipartisan support for its important mission, including from this subcommittee.

And, in turn, our Volunteers receive tremendous support from their host communities and countries. The Peace Corps only operates in countries where we are invited and those countries are deeply grateful for the work we do. In fact, the Peace Corps receives substantial support annually in cash and in-kind contributions from the countries in which we serve—some of the poorest countries in the world. These contributions help to keep our costs down, allowing the agency to operate globally on a shoestring budget—Peace Corps receives roughly 1 percent of the Federal Government's overall foreign assistance spending.

Volunteers' service to our country continues long after they have left the Peace Corps. As President Obama has said, "Returned Volunteers, enriched by their experiences overseas, bring a deeper understanding of other cultures and traditions back to their home communities in the United States." Many former Volunteers—or, as we call them, Returned Volunteers—use their training and experience to become leaders in society, in areas ranging from private industry to development work, and from community service to Congress. The skills they acquire while serving—whether fluency in a foreign language, complex problemsolving, familiarity with a foreign culture or expertise in agricultural practices—are invaluable to the United States, as is the commitment to public service that the Peace Corps instills. Ultimately, the investment that we make in our Volunteers is repaid many times over, at home and abroad.

PEACE CORPS' COMPREHENSIVE AGENCY ASSESSMENT: A BLUEPRINT FOR REFORM

The Peace Corps has had many successes, but there have been setbacks, too. In order to build on our achievements, improve our operations, and ensure we meet new challenges and opportunities head on, the agency has embarked on a wide-ranging series of reforms.

As directed by Congress, the Peace Corps conducted a thorough self-assessment and submitted a report to Congress last year that clearly articulates the agency's strategic vision for, among other things, Volunteer recruitment and placement, Volunteer and staff training, Volunteer programming, and medical care of Volunteers. The Comprehensive Agency Assessment is a blueprint for reform throughout the agency. It lays out a clear strategic vision—the Peace Corps will be a leader, in partnership with others, in the global effort to further human progress and foster understanding and respect among people. In order to achieve this vision, the Assessment puts forth a six-part strategy and a number of specific recommendations. In just over a year we have made significant progress in advancing the six strategies of the Assessment, and we have implemented or are implementing over three-fourths of the Assessment's recommendations, putting us on track to meet our aggressive timeline for implementation.

Many of these recommendations, of course, require sustained and comprehensive efforts that will take some time, and some of them depend on action by Congress. I am grateful to the Foreign Relations Committee for approving one proposal, included in Senator Isakson's bill, that would address a serious management problem at our posts overseas. The provision would help provide for greater efficiency and consistency in how we hire and manage overseas staff, and I look forward to its enactment.

The Assessment recommended that the agency take a deliberate, evidence-based approach to the countries where we operate and to the allocation of Volunteer and financial resources. This process, which we call country portfolio review, represents a significant step forward. The agency conducted the first ever portfolio review last year and work is already underway on this year's portfolio review. The portfolio review data was used to inform decisions about potential country openings, country closures, and the allocation of Volunteers.

The Assessment also recommended that we strengthen the technical assistance we provide around the world by focusing on and scaling up a limited number of highly effective projects. As a result, our overseas posts are focusing their efforts on activities and projects with the greatest impact. At the headquarters level, the agency is in the process of developing program guidance and training packages that can be used all over the world to ensure greater consistency and quality. Our first training package will be Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

Peace Corps has taken an important first step toward implementing a dynamic recruitment strategy. We are currently in the process of automating our application system so that we can create a more streamlined, customer-focused, competitive, state-of-the-art process for recruitment, selection, and placement of Volunteers. And we are working to launch a pilot program that will expand opportunities for Americans who have highly specialized skills and significant work experience, but who may not be able to make a 2-year commitment, to serve for shorter periods of time.

The Assessment emphasized the need to elevate what we at Peace Corps call the "Third Goal"—helping to promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans. The Third Goal is a critical component of our mission. This year we commemorated our 50th anniversary and through activities and events, including Peace Corps being featured at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, we have been able to educate Americans about peoples around the world. We encourage returned Volunteers to share their overseas experiences with Americans by, for example, speaking to elementary, secondary, and postsecondary classrooms in their communities through our Coverdell World Wise Schools Speaker's Match program.

The most comprehensive strategy in the Assessment addresses the need to strengthen management and operations through updated technology, innovative approaches and improved business processes. It covers many activities and every office within the Peace Corps. The agency is working to turn these ideas into reality by emphasizing evidence-based performance management, providing additional training to staff, and conducting studies of operational activities and staffing patterns of several staff offices to identify efficiencies and streamline operations.

Improving the agency's management structure has been one of my priorities since I was sworn in as director in 2009, which is why I hired the agency's first Director of Innovation and created the Office of Global Operations. Working closely with offices throughout Peace Corps, the Office of Innovation is spearheading efforts to find new, more efficient and effective ways to organize and operate across the agency, as well as to address the recommendations that resulted from the Assessment. The Office of Global Operations was created to provide overarching strategic support and management to the agency's direct Volunteer operations. This office is working to disseminate best practices, provide an organized, cohesive voice to agency leadership, and coordinate the activities of all overseas operations.

PEACE CORPS' COMMITMENT TO VOLUNTEERS

Our most important reforms lie in the area of Volunteer safety and support. Nothing is more important to me, as Director of the Peace Corps, and as a returned Volunteer, than the health, safety, and security of every member of the extended Peace Corps family. Peace Corps Volunteers represent the best America has to offer, and we owe them our best in return.

We give our Volunteers extensive training and we work hard to make sure that their service is rewarding, productive, and safe. But we recognize that there is always room for improvement. Since I became Director 2 years ago, it has become apparent to me that the Peace Corps has not always been sufficiently responsive or sensitive to victims of crime and their families. I sincerely regret that. None of us wants to inflict any additional trauma upon the victims of crime. That is not Peace Corps policy. That is not the Peace Corps way. All of us, past, present, and future Volunteers, are valued members of the Peace Corps community. A crime against one is a crime against all of us.

Since the Peace Corps was founded 50 years ago, more than 200,000 Americans have served as Volunteers in 139 countries, and we are all enormously proud of their remarkable service to the United States. I know that you share that pride. Volunteers embody compassion, generosity, and an unbridled belief that together we

can achieve more than we ever could by working alone. It is these qualities that deepen our pain when there is a loss. We care profoundly about the welfare of our Volunteers. Every life lost and every act of violence against a Volunteer is a tragedy. The names of Volunteers who have died while serving are engraved on a memorial wall at our headquarters. They are not forgotten.

The Peace Corps has met with a number of returned Volunteers who have shared personal experiences of rape and sexual assault. I would like to thank them publicly for their courage in coming forward and for helping us to make needed reforms. Their insights are invaluable and have helped shape our commitment to make the survivor's perspective a critical part of our reforms. I am sorry for what they suffered, and I am committed to ensuring that their experiences are not repeated.

Over the past 2 years, we have put in place new policies to minimize the risks faced by Volunteers and to improve the way we respond to victims of crime. We have been working closely with our Inspector General's office and have implemented or are implementing all of the recommendations from the Inspector General's report last year on our Volunteer safety and security program. While the Peace Corps cannot eliminate every risk Volunteers may face during their service, I am committed to making sure that we do everything we can to protect Volunteers and provide effective, compassionate support to them and their families when a tragedy does occur.

I welcome efforts in Congress to codify the reforms we have put in place and I would like to recognize a member of the subcommittee, Senator Johnny Isakson, for his remarkable commitment to the well-being of Peace Corps Volunteers. I am very grateful to Senator Isakson for his efforts to ensure justice for the murder of Kate Puzey, an outstanding Volunteer who was killed in Benin in March 2009. Senator Isakson and Senator Boxer, another member of the subcommittee, have been working diligently to ensure all Volunteers—particularly victims of sexual assault—receive the support and services they need. I thank them for their willingness to work with all parties to ensure that their legislation, which passed the Senate in September, meets our mutual goal of enhancing the support and safety of Volunteers.

ENHANCING THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY OF VOLUNTEERS

Under my leadership, the Peace Corps has implemented a number of reforms to ensure we fulfill our commitment to Volunteers:

- We issued "Peace Corps' Commitment to Sexual Assault Victims," a set of core principles to ensure we provide timely, effective, and compassionate support to victims of sexual assault. The Commitment makes clear that all Volunteers must be treated with dignity and respect, and that no one deserves to be a victim of a sexual assault.
- We implemented new "Guidelines for Responding to Rape and Sexual Assault" that detail our victim-centered approach and the specific procedures staff must follow in order to respond promptly to an incident and provide proper support to a victim. We have also trained staff on the new "Guidelines," which include the "Commitment to Sexual Assault Victims."
- I hired a nationally recognized leader in victims' rights to serve as the agency's first Victim Advocate. Victims of crime can now turn to a skilled, capable Peace Corps staff member who will make certain they receive the emotional, medical, legal, and other support they need during and after their service.
- We prepared new standardized and comprehensive training for Volunteers on sexual assault awareness, risk reduction strategies, Peace Corps reporting and response protocols, and bystander intervention. This replaces and improves upon the sexual assault training currently provided to Volunteers. We are in the process of training overseas staff at all of our posts on the new sexual assault curriculum at regional "training of trainer" workshops, which will be complete by the end of the year. The new curriculum was developed by the agency's Sexual Assault Working Group, which includes returned Peace Corps Volunteers and survivors of rape and sexual assault, as well as staff with expertise in trauma response.
- We signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN), the Nation's largest antisexual violence organization, to collaborate and share resources on sexual assault prevention and response. RAINN has been an invaluable partner for Peace Corps, and we are very grateful for the advice and expertise they have provided us.
- I created the Peace Corps Volunteer Sexual Assault Panel, made up of outside experts and returned Volunteers who were victims of sexual assault. The indi-

vidual members of this Panel provide advice and input on the Peace Corps' sexual assault risk reduction and response strategies. The panel includes representatives of RAINN, the Department of Defense's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, and the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women and Office for Victims of Crime, among others.

- We trained overseas staff in how to respond appropriately when Volunteers bring allegations of wrongdoing to their attention. The agency's policy, which dates to early 2009, requires any Peace Corps staff member who receives or has knowledge of a Volunteer allegation to treat the allegation with the utmost discretion and confidentiality, to take appropriate measures to ensure the Volunteer's safety, and to ensure the allegation is given serious consideration including referral to Peace Corps' Office of Inspector General when appropriate. We are also training Volunteers on policies and procedures for bringing confidential concerns to the attention of appropriate staff.
- We issued guidance for overseas staff on the specific procedures to follow when Volunteers express concerns about their safety, or in any other situation that may threaten the well-being of Volunteers.
- We have taken steps to improve the medical care we provide Volunteers by giving our medical professionals at headquarters overall responsibility for hiring, credentialing, and managing Peace Corps Medical Officers (PCMOs) at every post and by providing enhanced guidance to those PCMOs on how to handle serious medical issues. New Regional Medical Officers were hired to assist in the health care of Volunteers and a Quality Improvement Council was established to monitor and report on ongoing health care issues.

These are just some of the many steps we have taken to better protect and support Volunteers.

EFFECTIVE TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEERS

Peace Corps' success depends on our Volunteers, and we provide them with extensive information, training, and support to succeed. The process of educating prospective Volunteers about service in the Peace Corps begins long before they step off the plane in their country of service. The Peace Corps is completely open about the extent of crimes committed against Volunteers. We publish an annual "Report of Volunteer Safety" that includes detailed data regarding crimes against Volunteers, including rapes and sexual assaults, as well as trends for the past 10 years. Reports from the last 5 years are posted on the Peace Corps Web site.

When we invite applicants to serve, we provide them with country-specific information on health, safety, and security, and crime data to help them make an informed decision about whether Peace Corps service is right for them. After they accept the invitation, we give Volunteers an average of 10 weeks of in-country training before they begin their service, plus additional training throughout their 27-month commitment. This training covers technical, cross-cultural, health, and safety and security issues, plus instruction in any of the many languages we teach—over 120 in Africa alone. We also provide Volunteers with a monthly living allowance and comprehensive medical coverage throughout their service.

Every Peace Corps post has a Peace Corps office and staff managed by a Country Director. The country staff includes the Safety and Security Coordinator, one or more medical professionals, and program managers and trainers. The country staff is responsible for, among other things, evaluating and selecting Volunteers' work and housing sites. In selecting sites for our Volunteers to live, we carefully consider factors such as access to medical care, proximity to other Volunteers, availability of communications and transportation, crime rates, and the potential for obtaining and maintaining the support of local authorities and the community at large.

All posts receive regional and global support in health and safety operations. The Office of Safety and Security at headquarters oversees all Peace Corps security programs, both domestically and overseas. The office has more than two dozen staff, including 10 Peace Corps Safety and Security Officers who are based regionally around the world and who provide technical expertise, guidance, and training to Peace Corps posts. This office is headed by a security professional who has 27 years of experience in security and law enforcement, both in the United States and overseas.

In the event of an emergency, we immediately work with our leadership team in country to assess the situation and implement an effective solution; in the case of a medical emergency, the solution may entail local hospitalization or a medical evacuation to a regional site or back to the United States. Each post also has a country-specific emergency action plan, tested on an annual basis, which instructs Volunteers on how to respond to events such as natural disasters or civil unrest.

SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

The Peace Corps, as an agency and as a family, is committed to providing the highest quality support and service to Volunteers who have been the victims of sexual violence or other crimes. From the moment a Volunteer first reports a rape or sexual assault we must be ready, willing, and able to provide compassionate and effective support and assistance. That is my commitment, and I believe that we have, as an agency, taken enormous strides in the past few years toward making it a reality, thanks to the productive conversations we have had with the broader Peace Corps community and outside experts. That work is still ongoing.

As part of the Peace Corps' victim-centered approach we have put in place systems to allow victims to report sexual assaults and obtain prompt, compassionate assistance without fear of being judged. Dedicated specialists from the medical, mental health, security, and legal fields are available from Peace Corps headquarters to help Volunteers, as needed, with the response and recovery process.

The Peace Corps' Counseling and Outreach Unit at headquarters is key to our victim-centered approach to responding to an emergency. Mental health counselors are available to all Volunteers for any of their needs, ranging from routine check-ins to coping with major traumatic events. The Counseling and Outreach Unit is trained to deal with emergencies and offers support to both victims and their families. The unit trains Peace Corps medical staff at posts to provide initial emotional support services to all Volunteers, including victims of sexual assault. Should a Volunteer need specialized care that is beyond the expertise of Peace Corps medical staff, the Peace Corps will provide access to medical professionals who can effectively support the Volunteer's needs. The Peace Corps Counseling and Outreach Unit also maintains a 24-hour hotline for families to get more information about natural disasters, like tsunamis and earthquakes, or other emergencies.

In addition to providing support to victims, the Peace Corps makes every effort to protect Volunteers from sexual violence. Both staff and Volunteers participate in regular training on safety and security. This training covers a variety of topics related to sexual assault, and other risks that Volunteers may face while serving. The Peace Corps has a reporting system to track and analyze safety and security incidents and the data collected is used to instruct our operations and improve Volunteer and staff security.

When an assault occurs, we work with our partners in host countries to bring perpetrators to justice. Seventy percent of the rapes, attempted rapes, and major sexual assaults of Peace Corps Volunteers that took place in 2009 and 2010 and were reported to local authorities resulted in arrests. Forty-six percent have resulted in convictions, and a number of other cases are scheduled for trial or still under investigation.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to the Volunteers, past and present, who have served their country so selflessly. I am deeply grateful to them for their dedication and service, and I am committed to doing all I can as Director of the Peace Corps to protect and support them. I know that the members of the subcommittee share this goal and I look forward to working with you and others to ensure the continued success of this agency and its Volunteers.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Director, for your testimony.

I appreciate the Peace Corps' support of Kate Puzey Volunteer Protection Act. I am happy to hear that Volunteer sexual assault survivors and leading organizations in the antisexual assault violence field were consulted as the Peace Corps reformed its assault prevention and response training procedures. I am encouraged to learn of the reforms that the Peace Corps is enacting to ensure that there is an enhanced, consistent quality and coordination across the agency.

As I said to you privately, I wanted to say that to you publicly. I do want to just pursue additional questions with you since the committee has jurisdiction here, and we care very much about the Peace Corps and its future.

It concerns me that it seems to have taken negative media attention for the Peace Corps to take a hard look at its operations and enact reforms. And you heard me ask our distinguished former colleagues earlier about the culture at the Peace Corps, and I am

not talking about the Volunteers. I am talking about those who lead, not just yourself as the director, but everyone who leads underneath, that requires the media or Congress to step in and pursue reforms when they are necessary for the safety of Volunteers.

I have heard from several Volunteers that in the past, management has abided by a culture of “don’t bother me” with safety concerns or “buckle up.” I don’t believe that that is the appropriate culture.

So, I am wondering what you have done within the context of these reforms to ensure those underneath you—regional directors, country directors—understand that the input of Volunteers is not only to be heard, listened to, and responded to and, where appropriate, incorporated in the changes that will only strengthen the Peace Corps and its mission in the days ahead.

Mr. WILLIAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Very, very important question, and I can understand your point of view. And thank you for our private conversation the other day when we talked about that issue.

I want to say that we are doing everything that we can to make sure that the Peace Corps continues to have a compassionate, responsive culture to protect our Volunteers. And the way to do that, I believe, is, No. 1, you have to have the right policies in place. You then have to have the right procedures and practices in place that adhere to those policies, and then you need to train everybody at all levels to understand the role that they play in this organization.

Because we want the Peace Corps to be the most responsive, forward-leaning human development agency in the 21st century. And so, the reforms that we have put in place have been aimed at doing that.

We have trained our staff in terms of the guidelines for responding to rape and sexual assault. We have trained them on how to handle anyone who wants to come forward with confidential information that might be a whistleblower. We have trained them on the best way to respond to victims of sexual assault, whether it is a doctor or our country directors or our regional directors.

We have worked at every level in the Peace Corps, from me, the deputy director, chief of staff, our regional directors, our country directors, and the staff that works with them in the 76 countries where we serve, to put in place very significant, comprehensive, standardized, broad-based training and to make sure that it is uniform worldwide, no matter where we might have people deployed.

So I think we are doing everything that we can, and I am happy to walk through that in detail with you or your staff or any other member of the committee if you wish because I think you would be very pleased with the comprehensive nature, the standardized nature, and the intensity of the training.

Senator MENENDEZ. Now in that process, whistleblowers at a Volunteer level will be protected. What about whistleblowers at the agency? They don’t necessarily have the same protection. What is your view of that?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Well, as Federal employees, they, of course, enjoy the same rights and privileges of a whistleblower under Federal law. That certainly is the case. And I think, more importantly, we

like to encourage openness and transparency to ensure that people will speak truth to authority, if you will.

I want to know if there are issues that affect operations of the Peace Corps and also, more importantly, if they have anything to do with the safety and security of our Volunteers. So they certainly enjoy those rights and privileges.

Senator MENENDEZ. The 5-year rule, I have heard it referred to here earlier, and I know that it was a concept of reinvigorating the Peace Corps and a consistent transfusion of blood, so to speak. However, major organizations need expertise and institutional knowledge, so is there something to be said for revisiting the 5-year limitation to exempt certain positions in the leadership of the Peace Corps in order to ensure a certain degree of continuity, while the transformation and the lifeblood that the 5-year limit presents can remain a reality for nonessential staff?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Senator, I think, first of all, in terms of the 5-year rule, we have benefited greatly over the 50 years of the Peace Corps because it has allowed fresh blood to come in, new Volunteers. And roughly 60 percent of my current staff are returned Peace Corps Volunteers. Most of them are young Volunteers who have served probably in the last 5 to 6, 7 years.

But at the same time, I think, as a modern organization, as you have pointed out, it can be a great constraint to not have the continuity of management if you have a 5-year rule. So I would welcome a review of the 5-year rule. I would love to join with you in that discussion and to take a look at what might be done. I think the time has come to look at that again.

Senator MENENDEZ. And last, Senator Udall has had proposals for some time of a buddy system, and I understand the potential opposing views to that. By the same token, there may be times, Senator Dodd referred to it, where the nature of the project, the difficulty of it, the location, may, in fact, call for clustering. Is the agency open to those views?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Mr. Chairman, anything that contributes to the safety and security of the Volunteers we are totally open to discussing. And we do, at this point in time, often try to put Volunteers in clusters, either because of the technical sector they might be working in, from a programmatic standpoint, or because of the region.

But at the same time, I am open to looking at any possible way of trying to provide a more safe and secure environment for the Volunteers. And if the buddy system is something that you think we should take a look at, we stand ready to look at that.

Senator MENENDEZ. I appreciate your openness, and our goal here is, is to have an even more robust, more productive 50 years ahead. So we appreciate your willingness to be open-minded about engaging with the committee and former Volunteers and others who have the same mission in mind.

Senator Rubio.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your service. Thanks for being here today.

Mr. WILLIAMS. Thank you, Senator.

Senator RUBIO. I just want to put a brief comment on the record about something that we will talk about more in the future as we

talk about reform to the Peace Corps. Obviously, we are all very concerned about the reports of violence committed against Peace Corps Volunteers, about recurring security problems.

I am reminded of a case in Florida. It is actually a fellow University of Florida alumni from Fort Pierce, FL. His name was Tom Maresco, and he was serving as a science teacher. He was gunned down almost a year ago in September, and his family has raised some important concerns about the way that matter was handled and the aftermath and some concerns about the recruiting process as well.

And I certainly wanted to bring that out in the hearing and, hopefully, have an opportunity to talk to you and your folks about how to deal with some of those issues moving forward.

So I wanted to ask you basically the same questions that I asked the previous panel. And one is about what we are doing to try to channel the idealism and the collaborative spirit of this generation of young Americans?

Two is what can we do, and I think some other things have been talked about already. You have even referred to them in your opening statement. But what we can do to really help some Americans who are nearing retirement but have a lot of talents?

And three, how we can prioritize. Again, I think former Senator Dodd pointed it out that we really shouldn't be using it as a tool of short-term foreign policy. On the other hand, I do think there are places in the world that perhaps we have overlooked in the past or perhaps have overlooked us, where we now have an opportunity to engage along the lines of the Peace Corps, I think it serves a long-term foreign policy gain, but at the same time, I think it is true to the mission statement of the Peace Corps.

So your general thoughts on a pretty broad topic?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Thank you, Senator. And also thank you for the nice shout-out regarding University of Florida and the fact that the Gators are a big part of Peace Corps.

And we would be very happy to talk to you and your staff privately about the Maresco case. It was a terrible blow to the Peace Corps family. Tom Maresco was an outstanding Volunteer, and we are doing everything we can to pursue that case, working with the State Department and the authorities in Lesotho. So we would be happy to talk to you and brief you fully on that.

On the older Volunteers, I think we are about to see a growth of older Volunteers serving in the Peace Corps for a couple of reasons. First of all, I see more and more, as I travel around the United States, the parents of Peace Corps Volunteers wanting to have the same experience that they see that their children are enjoying when they visit them in the countries where we serve.

Second, for those who have served in the Peace Corps previously, the baby boomers who are now about to retire again, we have this wonderful office called Peace Corps Response—it used to be the Crisis Corps, Senator Dodd referred to it—where we allow former Volunteers to serve on a short-term basis of 3 to 12 months in a country where they have the language and the expertise. And now, of course, they have had a full career.

And so, we are actively pursuing that. In a time of tight budget constraints, I believe that we are going to be able to grow because

we can use Peace Corps Response as a way to attract older Americans who have that experience and can still make a difference.

The other thing is that not a month goes by, Senator, when I don't receive an ambassador from a country or one of our American ambassadors serving overseas, and they ask me one of three questions. They ask me, "When can you return to my country? How can you expand in the country? Or can you come for the first time?"

We have a long list of countries that have invited us to come. No matter what budget level we have, we would never fulfill that demand, but there is ample opportunity to do that. And I know there are many hundreds of thousands of young Americans who want to serve.

And so, if you look at the young Americans and their interest in serving, as you so aptly described in your opening statement, and if you look at the baby boomers and the older Americans who are prepared to serve, we have a tremendous cadre, a great pool of Americans who are prepared to make a difference.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Director, for your testimony. We look forward to continuing to work with you in the days ahead, and we appreciate your service.

Mr. WILLIAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to talk to you and to Ranking Member Rubio. I appreciate this committee's longstanding support of the Peace Corps, and we will work with you on any matters you deem important.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you.

Mr. WILLIAMS. Thank you.

Senator MENENDEZ. Let me call up our final panel. Kathy Buller is the inspector general of the Peace Corps. She began her civil service career with USAID, where she held several positions before becoming deputy legal counsel and assistant inspector general.

She has also served as chief counsel to the inspector general for the Social Security Administration, cochair of the Inspections and Evaluation Committee of the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, was appointed by the Government Accountability Office Advisory Council on Government Auditing Standards. We welcome her testimony here today.

Kevin F.F. Quigley was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand from 1976 to 1979, is currently the president of the National Peace Corps Association, the Nation's leading nonprofit organization supporting Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and the Peace Corps community. He has held senior positions in civil society and Government as well as various research institutions, including as vice chairman of USAID's Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Assistance and legislative director to former Senator John Heinz.

Thank you for joining us.

And Senator Rubio has floor obligations. So we appreciate him being with us up to this point.

Liz Odongo was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guyana from 2001 to 2002. Her experience as a victim of sexual assault while serving led her to cofound a nonprofit that works to end violence against women. And she is currently the director of training and outreach at the D.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Thank you for sharing your story and your experience.

With that, please deliver your testimony in the order I introduced you. At this point, I would like to request that the testimony of Karestan Koenen be entered in the record. Without objection, so ordered.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The statement mentioned above was not available at the time this hearing went to press.]

Senator MENENDEZ. She was scheduled to testify on the panel, but due to personal circumstances, she was unable to join us.

We are going to include your full statements in the record. We urge you to synthesize your statement in about 5 minutes.

And with that, Ms. Buller, we call upon you first.

STATEMENT OF KATHY A. BULLER, PEACE CORPS INSPECTOR GENERAL, OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. BULLER. Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Rubio, distinguished members of the committee, I thank you for inviting me to appear before you today and allowing me to summarize my prepared statement.

As the inspector general for the Peace Corps, I am charged with providing independent oversight of the agency. My tenure began in 2008, and since then, my office has performed audits and evaluations aimed at identifying key challenges the Peace Corps faces in improving its efficiency and effectiveness throughout the world.

The Peace Corps is a highly decentralized agency, operating in 70 countries. Headquarters staff primarily rely on country directors and their staff to run programs in the field with limited guidance and oversight.

The decentralized nature of the agency necessitates effective business processes, including clear lines of communication, well-established policies and procedures, adequate oversight, and modern systems to inform and support them. Our work demonstrates that one or more of these elements are not always present and that the agency is challenged in providing consistent Volunteer support and strong management oversight.

For example, our 2010 audit of Volunteer safety and security found that although the Office of Safety and Security was intended to provide management of all agency security and safety functions, it served as a consultative office, not an oversight office and relied on overseas posts to request its assistance and implement its suggestions.

Without a clear management structure, no office accepted complete ownership of the safety and security program, and the program lacked most of the elements that I just described. The agency has taken corrective action on 25 of the 28 recommendations that we made as a result of that audit.

In the area of Volunteer health, a 2010 OIG assessment of Volunteer medical care in Morocco found that, similar to the agency's safety and security program, the medical program lacked adequate oversight. The report found limited participation of headquarters medical staff in the hiring and supervision of medical officers. Instead, those functions were performed by the country directors.

We identified agencywide shortcomings in the oversight of medical units, quality assurance, and the scope of practice. The agency

concurrent with all of our recommendations and took immediate action to remediate them. However, the agency has delayed some planned initiatives for increased oversight and clinical reviews of Volunteer medical charts because of resource issues.

My office is currently conducting a review of the agency's guidelines for responding to rape and major sexual assault, prompted by the concerns raised by Volunteer survivors of sexual assault. Our work indicates that before the agency issued the February 2011 guidelines and protocols on responding to sexual assault, the efficacy of the agency's response to incidents largely depended on the action of country directors.

I expect to be able to fully address this issue with you after we issue our preliminary report next month.

In 2010, we conducted a followup evaluation of the Volunteer Delivery System, known as VDS, the agency's most important business process for meeting its recruitment and placement needs. The report concluded that the agency failed to implement most of the OIG recommendations from a 2003 report and that many of the same weaknesses in VDS remained.

Among the most critical problems were inefficient business processes and inadequate information technology. Many systems are paper based, and the system cannot easily match applicants' skills with host country needs. Our report also found that the agency does not have a formalized definition of Volunteer quality and does not systematically track Volunteer quality levels. The agency is currently implementing a new Volunteer lifecycle management system that they anticipate will address many of our recommendations. We continue to encounter problems obtaining accurate and reliable data for important business processes. For example, access to reliable data on employee retention and turnover, cost, and cumulative impact of Volunteer medical accommodations, and the acceptance rates for Volunteer applicants has been challenging.

Moreover, until FY 2010, the agency lacked a central database to capture unfunded resource requests submitted by its component offices to management for review and approval. Access to reliable data informs and guides program budgeting, strategic planning, program development, and management.

My office is currently engaged in an evaluation of the impact of the 5-year employment cap and an audit of the agency budget formulation process. Both reviews are ongoing, and preliminary reports have not yet been issued. But the issues they raise will likely pose challenges and opportunities for agency reform efforts.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, the Peace Corps faces a range of management and performance challenges. The agency is making progress in confronting those challenges and is working to streamline operations and improve business processes critical to Volunteer support. However, the agency must continue to work to ensure that its business processes reflect today's Peace Corps, not the agency that was started 50 years ago.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Buller follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KATHY A. BULLER

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Rubio, and distinguished members of the committee, I thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. My testimony will outline the management challenges facing the Peace Corps as it celebrates its

50th anniversary this year, including findings and recommendations that my office has made to support Peace Corps reform efforts, the agency's recent progress, and my perspectives on the challenges ahead. I hope my testimony will support your efforts to ensure the Peace Corps remains a relevant, vibrant, and effective agency.

The Peace Corps Office of Inspector General (OIG) was established in 1989 after Congress amended the Inspector General Act of 1978 to include smaller agencies. I became the Inspector General (IG) on May 25, 2008, and in my role as the IG, I direct a small office of 21 employees comprised of auditors, evaluators, criminal investigators, legal counsel and support staff. I am fortunate to work with individuals who have a broad range of skills and experience, including seven returned Peace Corps Volunteers, and three former Government Accountability Office (GAO) employees. All of them have extensive private and/or public sector experience. Last year, our criminal investigators were granted full statutory law enforcement powers by the Attorney General including the authority to seek and execute search and arrest warrants, seize evidence, make arrests without a warrant while engaged in official duties, and carry firearms.

Our mission is to prevent and detect fraud, waste, abuse, and other wrongdoing in agency operations and programs as well as promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. My office serves as an independent oversight entity and my duty is to keep the Congress and the Director fully and currently informed about problems within the Peace Corps, the need for corrective action, and the progress being made to address our recommendations.

THE PEACE CORPS AT ITS BEST

In its 2010 "Comprehensive Agency Assessment," a report to the Committee on Appropriations, the agency identified four critical elements that define the success of its programs over the past 50 years, which correlate closely to our audit and evaluation findings. These four elements are discussed below:

- The Peace Corps' niche is that our Volunteers live and work for extended periods in communities where other service organizations tend not to go and stay. Volunteers learn the local language and culture, and form respectful relationships with their hosts. In our 2010 evaluation of Peace Corps/Cambodia for example, we reported that as a newly opened post, program staff had successfully identified a niche—teaching English at the secondary school level in rural communities, which other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or service organizations were not addressing. In PC/Ethiopia, our program evaluation found that Volunteers support HIV/AIDS programs in communities where few other NGOs operate.
- The Peace Corps thrives when it partners with and compliments the efforts of others. In the field, Volunteers support locally identified development priorities and coordinate their work with host government agencies, local, national or international organizations, and the host community. In a 2007 OIG study of effective country programs we documented best practices at nine high-performing posts: Volunteer work assignments were clear, host country counterparts were identified, and the host communities and organizations understood their roles and the role of the Volunteer.
- The agency is successful when it is able to provide the Volunteer meaningful work. This has been well understood in principle since the earliest days of Peace Corps, and we continue to focus our evaluations on how effectively our overseas programs ensure that Volunteers have meaningful work to do at their sites. In our 2011 evaluations of PC/Swaziland and PC/Romania we found well-developed project plans and solid processes for identifying and preparing Volunteer work sites.
- Fundamental to Peace Corps' success is the commitment to service displayed by Volunteers who are willing to serve, often under very challenging conditions. The agency has a new training approach to support Volunteers called, "Focus In/Train Up" intended to zero in on programming and training in areas where the Peace Corps can have maximum impact.

In addition to these elements our audits and program evaluations have found that these high performing posts have systematized processes, clear policies, and procedures. In our 2011 audit of PC/Ukraine, currently the agency's largest program, we found solid administrative systems in place and a clear organizational structure. The post's size allowed for economies of scale and specialized support for financial and administrative programs, such as vehicle management, contracting, and grants programs. Unfortunately consistent application of policies and procedures remains a challenge for the Peace Corps.

THE PEACE CORPS' MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

The Peace Corps, like other international organizations, faces a range of challenges—everything from safety and security incidents to currency fluctuations that impact posts' operating funds. Volunteers serve in 76 countries and operate at the grassroots level, usually in rural communities, often in remote areas far from the capital city and the Peace Corps office. Volunteers live and work with people of diverse cultural backgrounds and languages, and their projects and assignments are carried out with host partner agencies, without direct supervision by Peace Corps program managers. In short, the model of voluntarism that makes the Peace Corps such a unique and compelling experience can at the same time makes the agency's efforts to support and ensure the safety of Volunteers a challenge.

The Peace Corps operates 70 overseas posts, spread throughout five continents. Each post is managed by a country director (CD). The Peace Corps is a highly decentralized agency with headquarters staff primarily relying on the CDs and their staff to run the programs in the field. This model is only successful when there are clear lines of communication, well-established policies and procedures, and adequate oversight functions. Our audit, evaluations, and investigations demonstrate that one or more of these key elements are not always present in agency programs and operations.

We have found that the agency is challenged in providing strong management oversight and accountability to ensure the agency's mission is carried out consistently throughout the world. The agency is constrained by limited resources, inadequate planning, and shifting priorities. President Obama, like his predecessor, committed to increasing the number of Volunteers in the field and at the end of this fiscal year, the number of Volunteers serving surpassed 9,100, the most since 1971, a 40-year high. Regardless of prospects for growth, currently serving Volunteers must be effectively supported.

During my tenure, OIG's oversight work has been focused on two broad issues: critical Volunteer support and agency business processes. Critical Volunteer support systems such as safety and security and health care form the pillars of the Volunteer program. Without efficient and effective support services Volunteers may be put in jeopardy and precious resources could be misdirected. Peace Corps business processes, broadly defined, are the tools and systems the agency utilizes to accomplish its mission. Some of the key management challenges my office has identified follow.

A. *Critical Volunteer Support*

Volunteer service is central to the mission of the Peace Corps. The success of the Volunteer depends in part on how effectively the Peace Corps supports Volunteer health, safety, and security needs. In recent years, my office has conducted two major reviews of the Volunteer safety and security program and several reviews of Volunteer health and safety.¹ Every time we conduct a post audit or evaluation we focus on these Volunteer support areas. This year we also began a review of how the agency responds to incidents of Volunteer rape and sexual assaults. The testimony of these survivors during the Peace Corps hearing before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in May and our own work suggest that responding to incidents of rape and sexual assaults requires a well-conceived and comprehensive Volunteer safety and security program, as well as providing necessary compassionate care and support to Volunteer survivors of these crimes.

1. *Volunteer Safety and Security*

The Peace Corps Office of Safety and Security was created in response to a 2002 GAO report that identified weaknesses in the agency's safety and security program. Our 2010 audit of Volunteer safety and security found that, although the Peace Corps established the Office of Safety and Security to provide oversight and management of all agency safety and security, the office has acted in a consultative fashion, not as an oversight office. It has relied on Peace Corps' overseas posts to request its assistance and implement its suggestions. Our review found that without a clear management structure, no office accepted complete ownership of the safety and security program, and the agency's security program lacked essential elements. As a result, Volunteers were placed at greater risk because the agency did not ensure posts fully implemented required safety and security policies.

¹The OIG's 2008 evaluation focused on the agency's implementation of five key tenets of its safety and security program—responding to crimes and reporting and analyzing crime statistics; monitoring, assessing, and disseminating information on the security environment; providing safety and security training to Volunteers; developing, monitoring, and inspecting Volunteer sites; and planning for emergencies. The 2010 OIG audit of safety and security focused on the organization and implementation of the agency's safety and security function.

In a review of data available since 2004, OIG has found that 44 percent of posts we audited were not in compliance with the requirement to obtain a background check of post staff. After the policy was revised in September 2009 to include short-term contractors, OIG found that 73 percent of posts audited were not compliant. Our 2008 evaluation of Volunteer safety and security revealed that 40 percent of Volunteers' houses did not meet the posts' own criteria for safe housing. Also, 37 percent of the Volunteer Site Locator Forms did not contain sufficient information to locate Volunteers' sites in emergency situations.

Our 2010 audit also found deficiencies in the qualifications and training of overseas safety and security personnel. Peace Corps overseas safety and security staff were not consistently qualified to support Volunteers. The agency had not defined the skills and experience needed for security positions, nor provided consistent training or development opportunities to match the position responsibilities. Our audit reported the agency had not tracked and ensured corrective action on safety and security recommendations made to overseas posts.

Further, dealing with serious safety and security incidents against Volunteers—such as murder, rape, sexual assault, kidnapping, terrorism, or finding missing Volunteers—requires strong coordination between the Peace Corps and the Department of State. In our 2010 audit we recommended that the Peace Corps establish a memorandum of understanding with the Department of State that would define each agency's roles and responsibilities for Volunteer safety and security as a critical step in improving the agency's capacity to effectively respond to security incidents. This recommendation remains open pending the MOU being finalized.

To date the agency has provided sufficient information to close 25 of 28 recommendations from our 2010 safety and security audit and 18 of 20 recommendations from our 2008 safety and security evaluation. We continue to collaborate closely with agency management by providing needed clarifications and comments to its proposed actions as well as general advice with the aim of closing all remaining open safety and security recommendations. Taking the necessary corrective action to respond to our recommendations is an important step to improving its Volunteer safety and security program but the agency will need to continuously monitor the program to ensure the changes take hold and new issues that surface receive timely and effective resolution. I maintain that the successful implementation of these recommendations depends in large part on whether the Office of Safety and Security functions as the management and oversight office it was intended to be, rather than as a consultative office for overseas posts that responds to requests for assistance and offers suggestions. In late FY12, we plan to conduct a followup audit on the program's effectiveness and the implementation of OIG recommendations.

2. *Medical Care of Volunteers*

The provision of high quality medical care is a critical Volunteer support area and essential agency function. Our post audits and evaluations review and assess whether Volunteer health care needs are being met. Additionally, our office also responds to agency special requests for advice and assistance in this area. Following the death of a Volunteer in Morocco, the Peace Corps Director requested that OIG conduct an assessment of the provision of health services to Volunteers in Morocco. The report, issued in 2010, determined that the way in which PC/Morocco organized its medical services and provided health care to Volunteers had an impact on the deceased Volunteer's medical care.

The report had agencywide implications because it identified weaknesses in core agencywide medical operations such as the hiring of Peace Corps Medical Officers (PCMOs) and their scope of practice, oversight of health units, and quality assurance.² It determined that there was minimal clinical oversight of the Morocco PCMOs by the agency, which is responsible for developing and managing the Volunteer health care program. The report also concluded that the way the agency measured and monitored the quality of health care services provided to Morocco Volunteers was insufficient. The Peace Corps Director concurred with all the recommendations and made a firm commitment to implement them not only in PC/Morocco, but throughout all of Peace Corps' posts as appropriate.

In response to our report, the agency stated that is was going to take substantial measures to increase its oversight of medical care provided to PC/Morocco and Volunteers throughout the world. The agency took the following actions:

- Realigned the PCMOs' reporting chain to ensure qualified medical staff, not only the CD, oversee the medical support provided to Volunteers.

²PCMOs are staffed at each Peace Corps post to support Volunteers' health needs.

- Adopted a “Quality Improvement Plan” for enhancing clinical oversight and medical care of all Volunteers.
- Drafted a policy to ensure effective transfer of patient information between PC/Morocco medical unit personnel.
- Issued a series of technical guidelines for PCMOs intended to raise the standards of care for Volunteers.
- Implemented a more rigorous process for hiring and credentialing of overseas medical staff.
- Reformed the agency’s scope of practice policies defining the levels of work to be performed by PCMOs, based on their credentials and experience.
- Defined situations when the agency must be notified of a significant illness of a Volunteer. An initiative to develop a process for the immediate investigation of medical events is underway.

Nonetheless, certain planned initiatives have been delayed or not implemented due to resource constraints. For instance:

- The agency did not fully increase the number of medical staff required at headquarters to perform oversight and quality assurance functions in FY11.
- The agency failed to procure systems that could provide more effective medical screening or better track pharmaceutical supply inventory.
- A medical chart review process intended to increase clinical oversight was made more rigorous. However, only a small fraction of charts are being submitted by the posts and reviewed by clinical staff at headquarters.
- Implementation of an electronic health record system, which would facilitate clinical oversight and case management by headquarters clinical staff and provide data to inform management decisions and policies, has not occurred due to resource constraints. However, the agency is looking for feasible options.

3. *Sexual Assaults*

In response to a 20/20 broadcast earlier this year and a previous congressional hearing, OIG has initiated a review of the agency’s guidelines for responding to rape and major sexual assault, which is ongoing. For the purpose of this review, sexual assaults include incidents in three categories: rape (including attempted rape), major sexual assault, and other sexual assault. Our review is assessing:

- Agency guidelines and protocols for responding to a Volunteer sexual assault, including the support provided to Volunteer survivors.
- Staff training, roles, and responsibilities for responding to Volunteer sexual assault.
- Best practices in responding to sexual assaults that would improve the way Peace Corps responds to Volunteer sexual assaults and supports victims.

The agency has initiated the following:

- Hired a victim’s advocate, who serves as the central point of contact to coordinate support of Volunteer survivors. The victim’s advocate functions as a liaison between the Volunteer, the post, and other offices within the Peace Corps responsible for Volunteer sexual assault incident management.
- Issued new staff guidelines for responding to rape and sexual assault in February 2011. The guidelines define and clarify staff roles and responsibilities and the required steps to respond to an incident to ensure that a coordinated, compassionate response is provided to every Volunteer survivor.
- Provided standardized training on new guidelines for Peace Corps staff involved in supporting sexual assault victims in February of 2011.
- Provided response training on rape and sexual assault to current PCMOs in continuing education sessions.

We have conducted field work and interviewed staff responsible for the response and care of rape and sexual assault victims worldwide, including at eight Peace Corps posts. We will complete field work in three additional posts as part of this review and hope to issue a preliminary report at the end of next month.

And in this context Mr. Chairman, I would be remiss if I did not mention the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011, which the Senate adopted by unanimous consent. The legislation institutionalizes comprehensive sexual assault risk reduction training within the Peace Corps, and supports our office’s ongoing efforts to reach out to Volunteers early in their service so they understand how to report instances of wrongdoing or misconduct. We support a strong confidentiality policy, including authorizing penalties in cases of inappropriate disclosure—for example disciplinary action and ineligibility for reemployment with the agency.

We also appreciate your efforts to strengthen the independence of the Peace Corps Office of Inspector General. Our credibility is enhanced when OIG is free from any perception of partiality.

B. The Need for Enhanced Business Processes and Modernization

As part of the comprehensive assessment process the agency identified strengthening “. . . the Peace Corps’ management and operations by using modern technology, innovative approaches, and improved business processes . . .” as one of its six key strategies for guiding the agency in the coming decade. In our statement on the Peace Corps’ Management and Performance Challenges published in the agency’s 2010 “Performance and Accountability Report” (PAR) we identified the need to improve the agency’s business processes in order to accommodate growth and expansion. While Volunteer growth has not matched expectations, there is still a need for the agency to modernize and enhance its business tools and processes.

Throughout our audit, evaluation, and investigative work we have noted an absence of updated, clear policies and procedures and a lack of consistency in how the agency functions. Frequent turnover of the workforce, a result of the “Five-year Rule” (FYR) that limits staff appointments to 5 years, in most cases, contributes to a lack of institutional knowledge and exacerbates other management challenges, such as putting in place more modern administrative processes. In addition to the challenges already outlined, below are some of the more significant areas that OIG has identified.

1. The Volunteer Delivery System

The Volunteer Delivery System (VDS) is the agency’s most important process for meeting its Volunteer recruitment and placement needs. The VDS is the continuous cycle of activities intended to enable the Peace Corps to attain its goals by delivering qualified and suitable Volunteers to interested countries. The VDS cycle begins when overseas Peace Corps staff, together with host country partners, decides on the number and qualifications of Volunteers that are needed to fulfill project goals. This information forms the basis of the agency’s annual Volunteer trainee input goals, including the total number of Volunteers needed, the specific technical and language skills needed, and when Volunteers are expected to begin service. After the trainee requests are received, assessed, and approved, the agency aligns its recruitment and applicant process to recruit and screen applicants, and invite them to Volunteer service. Without significant modernization and improvements to the VDS, the agency will risk not meeting its performance and strategic goals.

In 2010 our office evaluated the VDS. The evaluation served as a followup to a 2003 OIG program evaluation report that identified several weaknesses in the VDS, including the areas of leadership and organizational change; information flow; information technology; medical screening; customer service; and staffing and staff training. The 2003 evaluation report determined that VDS lacked effective business processes and was poorly supported by technology. Many systems were paper-based or done manually, and the system could not easily match applicants’ skills with host country needs. It was also difficult to process applicants with complex medical histories. The 2003 report included 24 recommendations and our followup report, issued in December 2010, found that most of the corrective actions agreed to by the agency in response to the 2003 report were either not initiated or were not fully carried out, and many of the same issues remained. As a result the 2010 evaluation report made 13 recommendations in an attempt to address these longstanding concerns.

In addition to following up on the progress the Peace Corps has made since the 2003 report, the evaluation also assessed whether the agency was positioned to support growth and expansion of Volunteers serving without decreasing Volunteer quality. We were unable to conclusively determine whether the agency is maintaining Volunteer quality while increasing the number of Volunteers in the field. Notably, the agency does not have a formalized definition of Volunteer quality and does not systematically track Volunteer quality levels. We also found that the agency does not accurately track and measure its ability to recruit and place Volunteers whose skills meet host country needs and, because of difficulty in recruiting applicants with technical experience, posts were encouraged to request lower-skilled trainees.

The agency is currently implementing a new Volunteer lifecycle management system under the name Database of Volunteer Experience or “DOVE.” The agency anticipates that this new information technology system will drive the Volunteer delivery process and help the agency better match posts’ program needs with Volunteer applicant profiles, resulting in better Volunteer placement. The new system will also provide the agency with enhanced reporting capabilities that will provide important information to managers and agency leadership. The new system has the capability to accommodate evolving agency needs and priorities. Through the implementation of DOVE, the agency will be able to eliminate some of the inefficient paper processes and address some of the long-standing recommendations made by CHG. The agency’s commitment to implementing DOVE, modernizing the VDS, and implementing

other long-term projects that require resources will determine whether it can achieve its goals. Also critical is the agency's commitment to maintaining Volunteer quality and putting in place processes and data measurement systems to ensure Peace Corps is selecting and placing Volunteers who can help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.

2. Accessibility of Data Related to Peace Corps Operations

In conducting audits, evaluations, and investigations, OIG continues to encounter problems obtaining significant data related to Peace Corps' key business processes. For example OIG has had difficulty accessing summary data related to employee retention and turnover, cost and cumulative impact of Volunteer medical accommodations, acceptance rate for Volunteer applicants and the number of Volunteer applicants who do not fully match the skills requested by host countries. Access to timely and accurate data related to headquarters and international operations is essential to establishing efficient agency business processes and systems. This data should inform management's strategic and performance planning; program development and management strategy; and budget formulation and execution. Further the availability of accurate and complete data allows Peace Corps management to assess program effectiveness, efficiency, and ways to eliminate waste.

We found that some of the databases and IT systems used by the agency do not effectively capture and distribute useful data to decisionmakers. Gathering data often requires access to numerous systems and databases and staff must manually assemble it to develop needed reports and information. For example, up until late FY 2010, the Peace Corps did not have a central database to capture formal unfunded resource requests submitted by its component offices to management for review and approval. In addition, prior year data was not readily available for review and analysis, and as a result any data assembled may be potentially incomplete or inaccurate, which could impact important business decisions.

In addition, document management systems and certain key functions, including travel authorizations, vouchering, contract management, and leave requests, remain largely paper-based. Streamlining and integrating these functions through an IT solution would reduce data entry error, improve efficiency, reduce paper dependency, and provide greater storage and retrieval capabilities. These reforms would improve the agency's efficiency and effectiveness and support allow managers to make more informed choices.

3. The Protection of Personally Identifiable Information

The Peace Corps routinely receives, processes, and maintains significant amounts of Personally Identifiable Information (PII)³, and OIG continues to identify problems with the agency's ability to protect this information. Since FY 2009 we identified the protection of PII as a management challenge that requires enhanced management and internal controls. In June 2009, this matter came to the forefront, as OIG investigated and issued two reports related to the breach of more than 495 medical files that included applicant names, Social Security numbers, addresses, birthdates, dental records, lab reports, and medical questionnaires. In October 2010 the agency has identified nine breaches that compromised over 180 individuals' information. Unfortunately, the trend in human errors that are usually attributed to the cause of these breaches continues to persist.

The agency has stated that the implementation of DOVE and an electronic health records system are measures that would significantly reduce the risk of PII security breaches. However, until these proposed system improvements are made protection of PII will continue to be a management challenge. As previously mentioned, the agency's plan to implement an electronic health record system has not occurred due to resource constraints.

C. Ongoing Related Reviews

Currently, we are engaged in two important reviews which impact Peace Corps management challenges and support reform and enhancement of key agency business processes and tools.

³PII includes information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, such as name, Social Security number, or biometric records. Such information can be used to link to other data such as bank accounts and other financial or personal information that can assist perpetrators in committing crimes associated with identity theft.

1. Five-Year Rule

In February of 2011 we began an evaluation, which is ongoing, of the impact of the FYR on Peace Corps operations. The FYR became law in 1965⁴ when an amendment to the Peace Corps Act brought all employees, foreign and domestic, under the same personnel system and limited all direct hire appointments to a maximum of 5 years. In passing the FYR the Congress intended to “permit a constant inflow of new blood and ideas.”⁵ Congress amended the FYR in 1985 to allow for a third tour of 2½ years and again in 2003 to exempt certain safety and security personnel from the rule. Because the FYR has an impact on Peace Corps management challenges I would like to share some preliminary observations:

- Over 50 percent of the agency’s American staff from 2000 to 2010 were Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, including almost 80 percent of overseas staff. However, the average time between Volunteer service and staff membership is 8 years.
- Short staff tenures at the Peace Corps (2.5 years in 2010) are more than 3 times shorter than the rest of the Federal Government (7.9 years) and even shorter than the median tenure of private sector employees (4 years).
- The agency’s annual turnover rate has exceeded 20 percent historically and is more than three times the governmentwide average (5.9 percent).

Our final report will include data on staff tenure and attrition rates for each Peace Corps office covering the past decade. We intend to issue a preliminary report by the end of next month.

Agency Budget Formulation

We are currently conducting an audit of the agency’s budget process. We expect to issue a preliminary report in the coming weeks. Our findings will focus on the following areas:

- Government Performance Reporting Act (GPRA): GPRA requires that federal agencies link performance reporting and the budget. Such linkage is essential to using performance reporting data as an effective tool for justifying and prioritizing budget decisions, allocating resources, and formulating future budget estimates.
- Unfunded Resource Requests: The processes for these requests and budget reduction decisions need to be sufficiently transparent and a clear line of communication regarding budgeting decisions needs to be in place so that the highest priorities are adequately funded and that scarce agency resources are put to the best use.
- Documenting the Internal Control Structure over the Budget Process: Without an adequately documented internal control structure over the budget process it is not possible to confirm the level of risk assessed by management, or to determine if proper internal controls are established and operating effectively.

CONCLUSION

The Peace Corps faces a range of management and performance challenges as it looks forward to another 50 years. Today, the Peace Corps remains unique in its mission, but unlike 1961 there are other private and public sector entities working internationally. Peace Corps’ niche is still relevant, but in this difficult budget environment its future success will depend on its ability to concretely demonstrate its value and manage operations more effectively and efficiently.

The agency is making progress in confronting some of its challenges and has worked to streamline operations and improve the technology that supports key business processes and critical Volunteers support areas. The agency is taking important steps to modernize and become more efficient. The implementation of DOVE promises to substantially improve the ability of the agency to match posts’ program needs with Volunteer applicant profiles, resulting in better Volunteer placement. Increased management oversight over Volunteer safety and security and Volunteer medical care will support greater consistency of quality over these critical support services. The agency must continue to evolve and ensure its business processes reflect the activities of today’s Peace Corps, not the agency that was founded 50 years ago.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you very much.
Dr. Quigley.

⁴To Amend Further the Peace Corps Act, Public Law 89–134, section 2054, 75 Stat. 612 (Aug. 24, 1965).

⁵Congressional Record, 89th Cong., 2d. sess., 1965. 111, pt. 2768

**STATEMENT OF KEVIN F.F. QUIGLEY, PH.D., PRESIDENT,
NATIONAL PEACE CORPS ASSOCIATION, WASHINGTON, DC**

Dr. QUIGLEY. Good morning, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Menendez, I am honored to have this opportunity to testify before the committee regarding the Peace Corps and its next 50 years. As we come to the end of this remarkable 50-year celebration, this is a timely and important hearing.

During these 50th anniversary events that Senator Wofford alluded to earlier, we have succeeded in unprecedented ways. We have had 1.3 million people participate in these events in all 50 States and some 80 countries. But these anniversary celebrations weren't just about looking back at the past, but they were really designed with a key principle in mind, and that is the anniversary should be an opportunity to advance the work of the Peace Corps in striving toward a more peaceful and prosperous world.

One of the most remarkable activities of this anniversary celebration was a little more than 2 weeks ago. Five hundred community members had an opportunity to come up on Capitol Hill and share with Members of Congress and their staff their views on the Peace Corps and the impact it had on their lives. And with your permission, I would like to submit some of those letters into the hearing records.

Senator MENENDEZ. Without objection.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The letters referred to were too numerous to print in this hearing. They will be maintained in the permanent record of the committee.]

Dr. QUIGLEY. Thank you.

Much like today's hearing, the anniversary was about generating ideas and resources to prepare the Peace Corps for an even more successful and impactful next 50 years. And Chairman Menendez, as you said in your opening remarks, you have to understand the past to prepare for the future.

As Senator Wofford mentioned, the National Peace Corps Association, with Civic Enterprises, conducted an unprecedented independent survey and report involving more than 11,000 Returned Peace Corps Volunteers to assess their motivations for service, their views on their service, and the impact it had on their lives. And I ask that this report and the survey results be included in the hearing records.

Senator MENENDEZ. Without objection.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The report mentioned was too voluminous to include in the printed hearing but will be maintained in permanent record of the committee.]

Dr. QUIGLEY. Thank you.

And let me just briefly summarize three of the major findings and categories. Fundamentally, these 11,000 respondents suggest that Peace Corps service was most effective in promoting the goals related to understanding (Peace Corps Goals #2 and #3) and was effective, but somewhat less so, in terms of the meeting needs for trained manpower in other countries (Goal #1), the development goal of the Peace Corps.

As Senator Shaheen said earlier today during her conversation with constituents this past summer in New Hampshire, Peace

Corps is a transformative experience. In one of the most stunning findings from our survey 98 percent of the respondents would recommend Peace Corps to their child, grandchild, or close family member. And I don't think there is any other organization in our society—church, family, university—where 98 percent would recommend to a close family member that they should participate in that organization.

The survey results also make it clear that there is an unfinished agenda, a lot of work to be done. And so, let me just briefly offer a group of observations about the Peace Corps and four specific recommendations regarding steps to strengthen the Peace Corps.

One, there is an overwhelming consensus in the community that Peace Corps should do much better to document the good work it does. Two, that the model of 27 months of service, 3 months of training follow 2 years of service, is really the gold standard of international service, and it should not be changed.

Three, that model, however, should be supplemented by short-term service opportunities that allow senior and more skilled Volunteers to participate sometimes in conjunction with Peace Corps, but not necessarily through a Peace Corps administered program. And that these programs could potentially be delivered by universities, by corporations, or by nongovernmental organizations.

Here are four recommendations to strengthen the Peace Corps. One, I believe very strongly, as Sargent Shriver did, that bringing the world home is the most important goal of Peace Corps. And as Senator Dodd alluded to earlier today, this is an area that has received scant resources, less than 1 percent through its history. To succeed at this goal will require a modestly higher percentage of the Peace Corps' overall budget.

Two, as Senator Rubio suggested, a lot more, I think, can be done to align Peace Corps with our long-term national interests: significantly expanding our program in China is a great example. Getting back into some of the new global powers, such as India, Nigeria, and Brazil, would be an important step that the Peace Corps could take, although these programs would need to involve innovative approaches. I think that the annual portfolio review that Peace Corps has started to see how its country programs align with our long-term national interest is an extremely helpful step in this regard.

Three, revitalize the National Advisory Council. And Mr. Chairman, earlier in the hearing you were asking about the culture of Peace Corps, and I think best practice is to have multiple mechanisms to ensure that any organization is living up to its goals and principles. These include having congressional oversight, an engaged concerned community, media attention, as well as having an advisory council of experts who can provide strategic advice and feedback to the Peace Corps.

And my fourth recommendation is to routinely share information with organizations that promote Peace Corps goals and mission.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today, and I would be glad to respond to any questions or comments you have.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Quigley follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KEVIN F.F. QUIGLEY

Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Rubio, I am honored to testify before this committee regarding the Peace Corps and its next 50 years.

My name is Kevin F. F. Quigley, and I am President of the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA). Founded in 1979 and headquartered in Washington, DC, NPCA is the Nation's leading 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization supporting Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and the Peace Corps community through networking and mentoring to help guide former Volunteers through their continued service back home. It is also the longest standing advocate on behalf of the Peace Corps and its values of service and understanding.

I was privileged to serve my country as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand for 3 years between 1976 and 1979, teaching English in a secondary school and later at a teachers' training college in the Isaan or Northeast region of that country.

As we come to the end of a remarkable year-long celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps, this is a timely and important hearing. This year-long celebration was designed with two book ends echoing the remarkable inception of the Peace Corps: (1) the spark lit at the University of Michigan by then-Senator John F. Kennedy on October 14, 1960, leading to the establishment of the Peace Corps by Executive order on March 1, 1961, and (2) the passage of the Peace Corps Act less than a year later on September 22, 1961.

These 50th anniversary events were designed so that anyone, anywhere, who valued the Peace Corps could have a chance to participate. We succeeded in unprecedented ways: more than 1.3 million individuals participated in anniversary events in more than 80 countries and all 50 States. Besides commemorating 50 years of service and friendships and encouraging the next generation of Volunteers, this golden anniversary year was built on a key principle: it should not simply be about celebrating the accomplishments of the past, but rather this anniversary year should advance the work of the Peace Corps in striving toward a more prosperous world in peace.

On September 22, 2011, we organized one of the principal anniversary activities, 50 years to the day after the signing of the Peace Corps Act. On that day, we invited Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) to meet with Members of Congress and their staff to share stories and discuss why the Peace Corps still matters. More than 500 community members participated. As part of that effort, we collected letters from the participants. Here, I'd like to provide a few brief excerpts that discuss what the Peace Corps has accomplished.

Peter and Linda Dahm, River Falls, WI, Micronesia (1973–1975)

"We strongly feel that volunteers make a difference. As volunteers, we started an export company for an agricultural product and that company lasted almost twenty (20) years . . . Our experience has led us to a lifetime of commitment to our communities and our country. Currently, for example, Peter serves as the volunteer Chair of our City Housing Authority. Linda remains active nationally and internationally with the Girl Scouts among other activities."

Susannah Hopkins Leisher, Millburn, NJ, Nepal (1985–1987)

"Peace Corps made a fundamental difference to my life's path. It was the first step in what has turned out to be, so far, a 20-year career working to alleviate global poverty. I brought the Peace Corps-founded knowledge of the realities of poverty to ten years living and working in Vietnam, later carrying these lessons with me to West Africa and Central America during my recent five-year stint with Trickle Up, A New York City-based non-profit dedicated to reducing extreme poverty. The lessons of Peace Corps have enriched my service with many poverty-fighting organizations in many countries. The American taxpayers' modest and long-ago investment in my training and years of service has, I do believe, paid off many-fold."

Nick and Bay Bancroft, Medfield, MA 02052, India (1966–1968)

"We are two constituent who served two years in the Peace Corps in India from 1966–1968: Nick in small industry development (working in cast iron foundries and machine shops making irrigation equipment, as India modernized its sugarcane processing), and Bay in Nutrition and maternal/child health programs in the schools and villages of our town . . . We returned to the U.S. with a visceral understanding of how life and people are the same wherever you go, although their circumstances, for better and worse, are different from ours in different ways . . . For a miniscule

cost (compared with the cost of other U.S. agencies involved in U.S. foreign relations), Peace Corps volunteers fulfill their hard assignments, become fluent in the hard language, make strong connections with “real” people from the world’s developing nations, and return to the United States inspired and seasoned by their experience.”

Sharon Keld, Southampton, New York, Morocco (2006–2008), Philippines (2009–2010), Armenia (2011)

“I found that, to a person, every Muslim Moroccan who I met was pro-American and liked Americans—and on September 11, 2011, I reminded friend and family back home that that was the case.”

Wayne L. Haag, Saginaw, MI, Guatemala (1962–1964)

“As the U.S. must continue to adapt to an ever changing world, full of many challenges, the Peace Corps has left us better prepared to identify and/or create win-win situations, thus reducing conflict. I have been pleased over the years to see a growing number of U.S. Government and international staff positions occupied by people with Peace Corps backgrounds. America’s voluntary efforts, including the Peace Corps, set examples for the rest of the world to emulate, encouraging growth in international voluntary efforts. At home, RPCVs often use their experiences gained abroad, to strengthen domestic voluntary efforts.”

So, much like this hearing today, a key goal of this anniversary year was generating ideas and resources to prepare the Peace Corps for an even more successful and impactful next 50 years. This included the NPCA working together with the University of Michigan and the Brookings Institution to organize a national symposium on the future of international service in Ann Arbor, MI, in October 2010. Last month, on September 21, we released the results of the largest independent nationally representative survey of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs). I now ask that the survey results and an accompanying report, “A Call to Peace,” be entered into the hearing record.

REMARKABLE RESULTS FROM OUR “A CALL TO PEACE SURVEY”

This unprecedented independent survey with 11,138 respondents sought to explore why individuals volunteered, how they assess their experiences, and what impact it had on their lives and careers. This survey provides remarkable confirmation that Peace Corps volunteer service does lead to a lifetime of service, with RPCVs volunteering at twice the national average, improving communities at home and abroad.

Let me briefly summarize three general findings from our just-released survey:

1. **Waging Peace as the Overriding Purpose of the Peace Corps:** The Peace Corps experience has a profound effect on fostering peace and understanding among Americans and people around the globe (Peace Corps’ Goals #2 and #3), with significant but somewhat less effect in meeting the need for trained workers in those countries (Goal #1). More than 80 percent said their service was effective in promoting a better understanding of Americans in the communities where they served and an almost equal number said their service helped promote a better understanding of others at home. Fifty-nine percent said their service was effective in helping other countries meet their need for trained workers.

2. **A Transformative Experience:** The Peace Corps experience is transformational for Volunteers—an experience they would strongly recommend to their families; often changed the rest of their lives; and made them better citizens back home. Ninety percent of RPCVs rated their Peace Corps experience as excellent or very good, and a stunning 98 percent would recommend the Peace Corps to their child, grandchild, or other close family member.

3. **Unfinished Business:** President Kennedy said that the Peace Corps would be serious when 100,000 Americans served abroad every year. Since today there are only 8,600 learning new languages, understanding other cultures and leading to a more informed U.S. foreign policy that means we have a long way to go to realize the vision of its founders. To fulfill Kennedy and Shriver’s dream, the ServiceWorld coalition was formed. This coalition, with more than 300 colleges, employers, and nonprofit organizations, has rallied around an agenda to send 100,000 Americans abroad annually through three channels: the Peace Corps, which the RPCVs surveyed want to see doubled; Volunteers for Prosperity, which currently sends 43,000 highly skilled Volunteers each year to work on urgent issues such as HIV/AIDS and malaria in Africa; and new Global Service Fellowships that would tap up to 10,000

Americans for up to 1 year of service, with Members of Congress nominating outstanding individuals from their districts and states, much like they do for the military academies.

STRENGTHENING THE PEACE CORPS FOR ITS NEXT 50 YEARS

Fifty years into its history, the world is dramatically different than when the Peace Corps was first established. The world is more urbanized, globalized, and connected through technology, although there is a growing number living in poverty without access to health care, education, or the means to have a life of dignity. There are many countries that would like a Peace Corps program and many Americans who are willing to serve, but we simply do not have the resources to meet this demand.

Since the Peace Corps was created, there has been a proliferation of international service programs. This includes approximately 20 countries that have Peace Corps-type government international volunteer programs. A number of regional organizations like the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are developing their own volunteer programs modeled on the Peace Corps. Increasingly universities and corporations are developing international volunteer programs as central to their educative and business missions. There are literally thousands of different options to volunteer internationally, varying in length of time, location, and application requirements. Given these myriad options, the Peace Corps faces intense competition for volunteers—a competition that is only likely to increase in the decades ahead.

Our recent survey also explored various ideas about how the Peace Corps could improve during its next half century. Generally, there was a strong sense that there were unprecedented new opportunities for the Peace Corps to cooperate with other programs and organizations. Some of these ideas to strengthen the Peace Corps include:

- There was an overwhelming consensus that the Peace Corps should do more to document the impact of its work.
- There was also a strong consensus that the Peace Corps should not change its 27-month model, which includes 3 months of training followed by 2 years of service. RPCVs understand better than anyone that integration within the host community and the lengthy tenure of Peace Corps volunteer service is qualitatively different from other international volunteer programs.
- This overwhelming support for the 27-month program model was not, however, to suggest that the Peace Corps should not change. Rather, to meet changing circumstances in a dynamic and unpredictable world, the survey respondents suggested that the Peace Corps should develop a broader network of highly substantive partnerships with other volunteer sending programs including non-governmental organizations, universities, corporations and/or other federal agencies. In this way, the Peace Corps could better meet the need for more highly trained but shorter termed volunteers. In recent years, the Peace Corps has made progress in developing these partnerships, especially through PEPFAR (The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief).
- Many of these ideas to strengthen the Peace Corps harken back to the ideas of the Peace Corps' visionary founders, Sargent Shriver and Harris Wofford. They envisioned that there would be multiple channels for delivering high quality volunteer programs and that a self-administered government program was just one of those program delivery channels. The survey respondents endorse using multiple channels to deliver international service efforts.

MAINTAINING SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Since its inception, the Peace Corps has had an overarching mission of promoting friendship and peace with three specific interrelated goals, one relating to advancing human development through meeting the needs for trained manpower and two related to promoting understanding of other peoples and cultures. This mission and these three goals are as relevant today as they were when the Peace Corps was created. I also think that they are likely to be relevant for the next 50 years. I believe, as apparently Sargent Shriver did, that ultimately the so-called Third Goal of bringing the volunteer experience back home may be the most important goal of all of these.

In response to a congressional request, the Peace Corps completed an internal assessment and a strategic plan in June 2010. There are numerous good ideas contained in that plan. Like the Congress, the Peace Corps community is keenly interested in learning more about progress made in executing that plan, especially on an ongoing basis.

For the committee's consideration, I suggest four ideas to strengthen the Peace Corps in its next half-century:

1. Provide more support for Bringing the World Home. Unfortunately, the Bringing the World Back Home Goal has received the least resources, averaging less than 1 percent of the agency's annual budget these past 50 years. While it is understandable that the Peace Corps has focused its resources on recruiting, training, and supporting Volunteers in as many countries requesting the Peace Corps as possible, this underresourcing of this essential goal deprives the American people from benefiting as they might from the Volunteers' international service experience. Without knowing more about the understandings garnered from Volunteers' service and the results that Volunteers achieve at home and abroad, it may be increasingly difficult to secure the needed financial support in these especially challenging financial times.

2. Align Country Selection More Closely with Long-term National Interests. Developing programs with countries that are more clearly related to our long-term national interests is critical to securing ongoing support. The Peace Corps' recent annual portfolio review is an important step in the right direction. However, this portfolio review needs to weigh more heavily strategic countries important to our long-term interest and for them, in particular, develop innovative partnership approaches. These long-term interests pertain to U.S. economic, political, security and cultural interests around which there is bipartisan support. For example, these interests would include deepening the Peace Corps presence in predominantly Muslim countries and "rising global powers." For a variety of reasons, the Peace Corps has not had programs in countries of growing stature internationally, such as Brazil, India, and Nigeria for decades—perhaps in part because the Peace Corps succeeded there. The Peace Corps currently has only modest programs with two of the world's most populous countries, China and Indonesia. Developing programs with these rising global powers, which may involve working jointly in third countries or perhaps having bilateral programs where Americans volunteered there and citizens of these countries volunteered here, could be extremely important to advancing our long-term national interests. Peace Corps-type programs in and with these rising countries, or with other countries that have "graduated" from Peace Corps programs, such as Korea, might also create innovative cofinancing possibilities.

3. Revitalize the National Advisory Council. Established by the Peace Corps Act, the Peace Corps National Advisory Council is an advisory committee appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. In recent years, this Council has been moribund. In his FY 2012 budget request, President Obama indicated that he intended to revitalize this Council. He said that, "The council is also charged with making recommendations for the purpose of guiding the future direction of the Peace Corps and of helping to ensure that the purposes and programs of the Peace Corps are carried out in ways that are economical, efficient, and responsive to changing needs of, and relationships with, the countries and peoples being served." Revitalizing this Council could help fulfill the purpose of this hearing. I urge that this committee and the Senate push for a revitalization of the National Advisory Council.

4. Routinely Share Information with Organizations Promoting the Peace Corps' Mission. As long as the Peace Corps continues to focus the preponderance of its resources on recruiting, training, and supporting Volunteers (goals #1 and #2) leaving scant resources for bringing the world home efforts (goal #3), the best way for the Peace Corps to address this Third Goal is through extensive and substantive partnerships with RPCVs organizations. In addition to the NPCA and its network of 146 formally organized member groups, there are numerous other RPCV organizations that are working to help measure the impact of Volunteer service and assist with bringing these Volunteer experiences home in ways that strengthen communities at home and abroad. The government agency now interprets that the Peace Corps Act precludes sharing information with outside organization without the express consent of the Appropriation Committees. That presumption should change. I urge this committee's assistance in ensuring that organizations that promote the Peace Corps mission and values have regular and routine access to the information necessary to accomplish this.

Chairman Menendez, these are just a few ideas and recommendations on how the Peace Corps could be strengthened in ways that enhance its capability to make significant progress in advancing its timeless goal of a prosperous world at peace over its next 50 years.

I would be glad to address any questions or comments that you or other committee members have.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you very much.

Ms. Odongo.

STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH ODONGO, TRAINING AND OUT-REACH DIRECTOR, D.C. COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. ODONGO. Good afternoon. My name is Liz Odongo. I am the training director at the D.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and I am proud to be a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer.

I am here today hoping to make the Peace Corps better, safer, and stronger for its next 50 years. Part of shaping the future requires an honest look at the past.

When I was 23 years old, I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guyana, where I was stalked and terrorized by the same person who had assaulted the Volunteer who served in my site before me. The Peace Corps knew about this, but they had never warned me.

When it happened, I was young, scared, and alone, and I turned to the Peace Corps—my employer, my protector, my government. I asked the Peace Corps to listen and help me. Instead, it blamed and later disowned me. Unfortunately, thousands of Volunteers have had experiences like mine, and this year, they asked Congress to listen and to help.

You demonstrated your willingness to do both. So, today, I am here to thank the Senate for working hard to find a solution to this longstanding and systemic problem and for passing the Katie Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act, which, if ultimately enacted, will protect future Volunteers from the terror and isolation that I and so many others have experienced.

I also want to thank Director Williams for working with Congress diligently and enthusiastically during this difficult process. Thank you.

In the last 10 years alone, over 1,000 women and men, young and old, who chose to serve their country as Peace Corps Volunteers reported that they were victims of horrific sexual assaults during their service. It is estimated that in those same 10 years, at least another 1,000 were assaulted but chose not to report it.

You have heard many of the stories. A woman alone, walking down a street in Bangladesh, is taken, gang raped, tortured, and left for dead. A teacher thousands of miles from home is held captive and brutally raped for hours until she stops begging to live and starts praying to die.

But part of their stories that are too often overlooked is what happened afterward when they asked the Peace Corps for help. Historically, Peace Corps Volunteers and staff were often given no training on how to protect themselves or others from dangerous situations. Volunteers who were attacked often had no idea where to go for help.

Those who report their attacks to the Peace Corps staff were often dismissed, belittled, or blamed. In recent months, congressional investigation and media reports have revealed that Peace Corps' inadequate response to victims of sexual assault is systemic and longstanding. But the Katie Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act would change that.

First, this bill, championed by Senators Boxer and Isakson, requires the Peace Corps to provide vital training on important and

common sense techniques, such as the buddy system and bystander intervention, and to institute best practices in safety and survivor response. No more Volunteers will be dismissed when reporting danger or assaults. They will be taken to a safe place, seen by a doctor, provided appropriate mental health care, and given the opportunity to prosecute their attacker.

Second, the bill creates confidentiality protocols to ensure Volunteers are not put in harm's way for exposing danger or wrongdoing. No more Volunteers will be murdered in their sleep when their perpetrators find out what they reported. They will be protected.

Finally, the bill creates accountability and oversight to ensure these policies are followed. No more staff members who ignore or mistreat survivors will be rehired or left in positions of authority. Instead, actions will be taken to ensure Volunteers can trust those they must report to.

You have asked me today to provide you with my professional assessment of this legislation, not just as a former Volunteer and rape victim, but as a leading expert in the field of violence against women. I can tell you with confidence, as an expert, that I believe this bill is critical. It will save thousands more from the devastation that has already been suffered by too many.

In closing, I thank you for listening to me and commend you for your leadership and thoughtfulness in drafting and passing this bill to create a stronger, safer Peace Corps for the next 50 years.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Odongo follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH ODONGO

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Historically, Peace Corps Volunteers and staff were often given no training on how to protect themselves or others from dangerous situations. Volunteers who are attacked often had no idea where to go for help. Those who report their attacks to the Peace Corps' staff were often dismissed, belittled or blamed. In recent months, congressional investigation and media reports have revealed that Peace Corps' inad-

equate response to victims of sexual assault is systemic and longstanding. But the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act would change that.

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In closing, I thank you for listening to me and commend you for your leadership and thoughtfulness in drafting and passing this bill to create a stronger, safer Peace Corps for the next 50 years. Thank you.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you very much.

Thank you all for your testimony.

I appreciate your sharing your story, Ms. Odongo. And I want to ask you—this was part of my question to the director, and the earlier panel—you describe a set of circumstances in which what I describe as a culture was not responsive to you as a Volunteer who suffered a sexual assault. And you describe that that may very well have been the case with others.

What was it, what took place that was fundamentally wrong? What was the response when you went to your country director and told them what had transpired? What response did you get?

Ms. ODONGO. I first contacted and I first went to the Peace Corps office. I was very remote, no phones or anything. So I traveled to Georgetown, the capital, and first went to the Peace Corps nurse, who was very sympathetic and supportive. She connected me with the doctor, and the Peace Corps security officer was also very receptive.

They accompanied me back into the village to try to arrest the assailant. But it is the bush, and he disappeared the three times that they tried to arrest him. But that being said, after those initial response, when they couldn't do anything, it was as if they decided they couldn't admit that this happened and started to blame me and point out things that I had done wrong.

They put bars on my windows so that it felt as if I was living in prison and in jail and told me I couldn't leave my house other than the work hours. So it shifted from understanding and compassion to quickly blaming and distancing themselves from their role or their obligation to support me.

Senator MENENDEZ. And did you ever get to speak to the country director about your circumstances?

Ms. ODONGO. I did. There were a series of four incidents, and each time I was asked to write an incident report. And I think at least two of those times I met with the country director, and again, their response was more on what I should be doing and what I

need to do in the future to protect myself, not what would be helpful, not what I needed. And so, it just sort of—through the process, I sort of became complacent in that this was my fault and that I was the one in control of someone else harming me.

Senator MENENDEZ. Ms. Buller, this experience that Ms. Odongo talks about, is it an experience that your department, as the inspector general, has reviewed, and is it both quantifiable as well as been responded to?

Ms. BULLER. We are currently involved in a review of the agency response to sexual assaults, and we will have a report out within the next month or so. We have conducted that review and contacted numerous survivors of assault and have incorporated their experiences into our report.

So there will be a report, and hopefully, we will be able to quantify some of that, yes.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, I am looking forward to that.

So I see that you in your testimony talked about also undergoing an evaluation of the impact of the 5-year rule.

Ms. BULLER. Yes.

Senator MENENDEZ. What prompted that study, and have there been any past evaluations worthy of recognizing about the 5-year rule?

Ms. BULLER. General recognition, I think, about the lack of institutional knowledge in the agency was one of the drivers of our reviewing the 5-year rule. There have been studies conducted in the past, but we haven't had anything that actually would show the impact of that rule on agency operations, and that is what my office is undertaking.

We don't plan to make recommendations about the 5-year rule, but what we would like to do is to have a document that the agency and other decisionmakers can look at to see what the impact of that rule is on the agency's operations.

Senator MENENDEZ. So you are not going to make a recommendation about the 5-year rule, but you are going to make observations about it?

Ms. BULLER. We are going to provide data. We are going to be able to provide you with, for example, the average number of years a Peace Corps staff member stays on. But we will be able to also break that down by office, in particular core agency function offices.

Senator MENENDEZ. The last thing is you conclude your formal testimony by saying the agency must evolve and ensure its business processes reflect the activity of today's Peace Corps, not the agency that was founded 50 years ago.

Can you expound upon that? What exactly do you mean?

Ms. BULLER. The agency, given the fact that it is so decentralized, has so many business processes that directly impact support given to Volunteers. From what we have found through our work, not just in the safety and security audit or the medical unit, but also just regular post evaluations and audits, is that there aren't clear procedures in place for country directors and staff to follow.

For example, it is a site development issue in whether or not somebody should have known that somebody had already been harassed at site. That should have been included in a site history folder and accessible by staff. There is no policy in place that sets

out what should be included in folders, how they should be maintained, and how they should be used. Things of that nature.

Peace Corps needs to put the processes and procedures in place that are necessary for country directors and their staff to do their work adequately.

Senator MENENDEZ. I appreciate that.

Dr. Quigley, I glanced through "A Call To Peace," and I am looking forward to reading it in full. To what extent are recently Returned Volunteers encouraged to participate in the shaping of the organization after their service?

Dr. QUIGLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Not as much as we would like. Let me expand upon that a little bit. I think the question you are asking about the culture and the receptivity to Volunteer input is really a critical one. Any organization, any individual that is half a century old, sometimes gets a little set in its ways. That is completely natural and understandable.

The Peace Corps is a big, complex organization, which operates in a lot of countries. And I think every one of the 18 directors, if they came before this committee, could credibly say they can't succeed without the Volunteers. But there are often impediments to significant Volunteer input on a range of issues. Sometimes it is about structure. Sometimes it is about technology. Sometimes it is about personality.

There are a variety of factors that prevent essential Volunteer input preventing what we would all like to see happen, as much as we think it should happen. I think Peace Corps has done exceptionally well at engaging returned Volunteers in the recruitment process and in the training process. The Peace Corps has been less successful in engaging Volunteers/Returned Volunteers in the placement program review and staff assessment processes. As reflected in the scant resources provided to one of three fundamental Peace Corps goals that directly relates to Volunteers, the Bringing the World Back Home or so-called Third Goal, there are missing a significant opportunity to engage Volunteers/Returned Volunteers.

And I think you heard from all the witnesses today that the Peace Corps' three goals are timeless. Unfortunately, the Returned Volunteer community is not as strong a partner as it should be in implementing a key aspect of Peace Corps' Third Goal.

Senator MENENDEZ. I heard you mention a Volunteer advisory of returned Peace Corps Volunteers in your oral testimony, has that gotten any receptivity by the present leadership?

Dr. QUIGLEY. We understand it was included in the President's FY 2012 budget request. The President indicated that he intended to revitalize this National Advisory Council that exists in the Peace Corps Act, which has been moribund for the last couple of decades. We think that revitalizing this National Advisory Council would be a great step forward despite the resources required to do so.

The composition of this National Advisory Council, Mr. Chairman, wouldn't just be exclusively Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. A majority of the members would be Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, but there would be significant representation from non-RPCVs, allowing for the input and expert advice of others engaged in international service programs and international development.

These individuals could provide highly relevant expertise advice and a kind of strategic guidance and feedback that I think any best-of-class organization should welcome.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, this has been incredibly helpful. I want to thank all of you for your testimony and for your responses.

I certainly hope that the opinions of Volunteers and former Peace Corps Volunteers and Peace Corps staff continue to factor into the decisionmaking, that headquarters will serve as a resource, a facilitator, and a source of clear and consistent information and support for Volunteers and country staff, and that we develop a culture in the Peace Corps in which we understand that the very essence of the agency is its Volunteers, its human capital. How we best preserve, enhance, and promote that human capital at the end of the day will make for, hopefully, a fabulous next 50 years.

With that, the record will remain open until the close of business tomorrow. And with the thanks of the committee for your testimony, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:53 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR AARON S. WILLIAMS TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question #1. Ensuring Continuity.—While I appreciate that under your leadership, the Peace Corps is on track to enacting meaningful reforms, how will you ensure that those reforms that are not legislated continue to exist and be prioritized after you leave the Peace Corps?

Answer. As I noted in my testimony, I welcome efforts in Congress to codify certain of the reforms that the Peace Corps has put in place since 2009, in order to ensure that Peace Corps Volunteers receive the support and protection they deserve now and in the future. While I obviously cannot speak to any decisions that my successors at the agency may make, I have tried during my tenure as Director of the Peace Corps to ensure that agency culture, practices, and procedures reflect a fundamental commitment to ensuring the well-being of all Volunteers.

By hiring a nationally recognized leader in victims' rights to serve as the agency's first Victim Advocate, by signing a formal memorandum of understanding with the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN), and by establishing the Peace Corps Volunteer Sexual Assault Panel, composed of returned Peace Corps Volunteers and experts in sexual assault risk reduction and response, I have sought to ensure that our policies in this area are carefully vetted and based on best practices. I believe that we have established a strong foundation and key partnerships that will help make these reforms a lasting part of the Peace Corps.

In addition, where appropriate, changes have been made to the agency's formal internal policies and procedures to ensure that all current and future staff are aware of and abide by these reforms. For example, the agency created a new section of the Peace Corps Manual—which constitutes the authoritative policies governing the operations of the Peace Corps in the United States and overseas—to ensure that allegations and concerns expressed by Volunteers are given serious consideration, and that appropriate measures to ensure the safety of Volunteers raising such concerns. Staff have received training on this policy, which is contained in Peace Corps Manual Section 271. The agency also revised Peace Corps Manual Section 270, which addresses Volunteer safety and security, in December 2010, and provided detailed guidance to overseas staff on implementation of aspects of Manual Section 270.

The agency also recently revised its written medical guidelines for the clinical management of sexual assault to comply with the National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations. And the Peace Corps has distributed formal guidance to overseas staff on responding to rapes and sexual assaults, and on the specific procedures to follow when Volunteers express concerns about their safety, or in any other situations that may threaten Volunteer well-being. All of these documents are available on the Peace Corps' Intranet.

I also oversaw the creation of the agency's Senior Policy Committee, a formal internal body charged with developing and promulgating official agency policies in a comprehensive, consistent way with all stakeholders providing relevant input. Through its work, the Senior Policy Committee helps to ensure that agency policies are disseminated to and followed by all staff at headquarters and overseas.

In addition, as we implement the 2010 Comprehensive Agency Assessment—our blueprint for strengthening agency operations and performance—we are making a number of improvements to agency operations that are designed to be systemic and lasting. Through this effort we have developed and are now institutionalizing the country portfolio review, the Peace Corps' first-ever formalized process for allocating resources across our countries of operations; we are focusing our grassroots development efforts overseas on technical areas where our Volunteers demonstrate the greatest ability to be effective; and we are developing standardized core training to prepare our Volunteers to better complete their technical assignments, bringing greater consistency and quality to our Volunteer community and local partners around the globe. These efforts are supported by policy development, business model restructuring, and staff reorganization to ensure that they are sustainable in the future.

Question #2. Reoccurring Safety and Security Problems.—The April 2010 IG report noted that, between FY 2004 and FY 2009, it had identified “numerous” reoccurring evaluation findings, such as posts not thoroughly completing housing/site inspections, Volunteers engaged in unsafe behaviors, various cities where Volunteers were in locations considered unsafe, and inadequate emergency action plans. What steps are you taking to ensure that problems identified in one country do not reoccur in that country and do not reoccur in other posts? Given the repeated evidence in recent years of Peace Corps insensitivity and incapacity to address victims concerns, do you have confidence that the agency has finally taken appropriate lasting action to meet safety needs?

Answer. The Peace Corps takes the recommendations of its Office of Inspector General (OIG) very seriously and the agency's Chief Compliance Officer is charged with making sure that OIG recommendations are implemented in an appropriate and timely manner.

In its April 2010 “Final Audit Report: Peace Corps Volunteer Safety and Security Program,” the OIG made four recommendations specifically addressing the need to ensure posts comply fully with safety and security requirements. The OIG recommended that the agency: establish a process to identify and address reoccurring safety and security issues; establish a process to track post compliance with agency policies regarding staff background investigations; require that posts take steps to review and assess compliance with Peace Corps Manual Section 270, which addresses supervision of Volunteers, work assignments and site selection; and empower the Office of Safety and Security to review and provide guidance on actions taken by posts with respect to the safety and security of Volunteers. The Peace Corps has implemented all of these recommendations, and they have now been closed by the OIG.

The Peace Corps' Office of Safety and Security is charged with overseeing security procedures at posts and providing posts with the technical expertise, guidance, and training necessary to protect and support Volunteers. Safety and Security staff at headquarters and overseas help to ensure that posts are following appropriate procedures. The office includes 10 regionally based Safety and Security Officers, who visit each post at least annually and conduct a compliance review and risk assessment for each post at least every 3 years.

Over the past 2 years, the agency has undertaken comprehensive and systemic reforms to meet the safety needs of our Volunteers. This work is still ongoing, but, as noted in my response to question (1) above, I believe that we have already taken significant steps to better protect and support Volunteers and to make these improvements a lasting part of the agency's policies and practices.

Question #3. Crime Reporting.—The Peace Corps has a system to report crimes but for a variety of reasons, some Volunteers may be underreporting both crime and general security concerns. What measures are you taking to improve data collection and encourage Volunteers to fully report security problems?

Answer. The Peace Corps tracks incidents against Volunteers through the Consolidated Incident Reporting System (CIRS). CIRS is designed to ensure that the agency responds appropriately to victims of crime and to allow the agency to improve training and modify programming to enhance the safety of all Volunteers. The Peace Corps upgraded CIRS this year to improve reporting, tracking, and analysis of safety and security incidents. The upgraded system includes vehicular accidents

and incidents affecting both Volunteers and staff. It also includes a new case management function to help ensure consistent, ongoing support to Volunteers who are victims of crime.

Peace Corps Volunteers are instructed to report crimes to staff at post in order to ensure that they receive the support and care they need and that the agency is able to provide for their safety and that of other Volunteers. Through steps such as the issuance of Peace Corps' "Commitment to Sexual Assault Victims" and "Guidelines for Responding to Rape and Sexual Assault," the Peace Corps has attempted to encourage victims of sexual assault to report these crimes. The "Commitment to Sexual Assault Victims" includes the Peace Corps' pledge to treat such victims with dignity and respect, take appropriate steps to provide for their ongoing safety, help them understand the relevant legal processes and legal options, and protect their privacy. The commitment is included in the latest version of the "Peace Corps Volunteer Handbook," which all Volunteers receive.

Peace Corps also issued new guidance to staff on the specific procedures to follow when Volunteers express concerns about their safety, or in any other situations that may threaten Volunteer well-being. By helping to ensure that staff take appropriate steps to provide for the safety of Volunteers, the guidance should encourage Volunteers to report any security concerns they may have.

The Peace Corps publishes an "Annual Report of Volunteer Safety" which provides detailed data and analysis regarding crimes against Volunteers. The report is based on data collected through CIRS and it includes a discussion of underreporting of various crimes. See, e.g., pp.16, 29, 48 of the 2009 report, available at <http://multimedia.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/policies/volsafety2009.pdf>.

Question #4. Buddy System and Volunteer Clustering.—The Peace Corps has emphasized the importance of integrating Volunteers into the host community though some have proposed an alternate system that would allow Volunteers the option of pairing up for overseas assignments. What would be the implications of the proposed alternate system on both the safety and security of Volunteers and the way in which they serve overseas? How are decisions made about when to cluster Volunteers and the proximity of Volunteers in a cluster? Is clustering used routinely in sites where problems have been identified by past Volunteers?

Answer. The Peace Corps' "Strategy for Volunteer Safety and Security" emphasizes the importance of integrating Volunteers into their host country community. As the strategy states: "Peace Corps Volunteers are safest when they are in their respective communities and when they have established relationships with community members, host families and others to create an effective support network. Peace Corps staff plays a key role in helping Volunteers integrate into their community through training and site preparation. Much of what takes place during Pre-Service Training (PST) is designed to help Volunteers integrate, especially through language, cross-cultural and technical training."

While the Peace Corps is open to discussing proposals to allow Peace Corps Volunteers to "pair up," it is important to ensure that such proposals are consistent with the "Strategy for Volunteer Safety and Security" and do not hinder Volunteers' integration into their community. It is also important to specify what is meant by pairing. For example, requiring that paired Volunteers live together could make it more difficult for the agency to place such Volunteers overseas, particularly in rural areas where there may not be multiple work assignments appropriate for Peace Corps. Requiring instead that paired Volunteers live in proximity to one another would help to address this concern.

Another concern could arise if Volunteers were charged with serving as first responders for incidents involving their paired Volunteer. Taking such responsibilities away from trained Peace Corps staff could jeopardize the health and safety of Volunteers, and unnecessarily burden Volunteers. Currently, designated Peace Corps staff serve as duty officers at every post and are available 24/7 to respond to emergencies. Every post has a Safety and Security Coordinator and one or more Peace Corps Medical Officers to assist Volunteers. Moreover, under S. 1280, the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011, the agency would also be required to designate a Sexual Assault Response Liaison at every post to assist in the response to a sexual assault.

Where appropriate, the Peace Corps uses a strategy of "clustering" Volunteers, or placing a number of Volunteers in neighboring communities in relatively close proximity to one another. Peace Corps considers clustering of Volunteers an effective strategy to improve Volunteer support and programmatic effectiveness. Clustering helps:

- Increase Volunteer collaboration and support.

- Place highly skilled Volunteers near generalist Volunteers to improve technical support.
- Encourage communication between partners from different communities, enabling them to learn from each other.
- Facilitate management of Volunteers and the site development process.
- Improve peer support and responsiveness to safety and security concerns.

Peace Corps encourages clustering of Volunteers at posts. The decision to cluster assignments is made by each post based on geographic, programmatic, and Volunteer support needs. Roughly half of Volunteers report that are no more than 30 minutes away from the closest Volunteer.

Clustering is not a substitute for other steps the Peace Corps takes to address specific concerns at Volunteer sites. Peace Corps staff rely on site inspections and visits and site history documentation to ensure that sites are appropriate and meet all Peace Corps and post-established criteria. The Peace Corps closely monitors and regularly reevaluates the placement of Volunteers based on safety and security considerations, among other factors. The Peace Corps also institutes measures, as needed, to enhance the safety and security of Volunteers serving at particular posts, such as restricting the times when Volunteers may travel, the mode of transportation used, and the areas that Volunteers may visit.

Question #5. Peace Corps Expansion.—Currently, there are roughly 8,655 Volunteers in the Peace Corps. The Bush administration’s 2002 expansion initiative would have doubled the agency’s size from its January FY 2002 level of 7,000 to 14,000 by FY 2007. The Obama administration has proposed budgets with a stated objective of reaching an 11,000 Volunteer force by 2016. Why should the Peace Corps expand? What size Peace Corps would you view as optimal? Is there, in your view, an optimal number of countries in which the Peace Corps should operate?

Answer. The work of Peace Corps Volunteers to promote development at the grassroots level, and promote a better understanding of Americans overseas, is more important than ever in an increasingly complex world. Volunteers spend 27 months living and working in areas that other programs are often unable to reach. Their work, which ranges from targeting some of the most debilitating diseases around the world to promoting sustainable farming practices, is crucial.

The Peace Corps operates globally on a shoestring budget—Peace Corps receives less than 1 percent of the Federal Government’s overall foreign spending. Moreover, the investment we make in our Volunteers continues to be repaid long after they have returned home. As President Obama has said, “Returned Volunteers, enriched by their experiences overseas, bring a deeper understanding of other cultures and traditions back to their home communities in the United States.” The skills, knowledge, and commitment to public service that Volunteers acquire through their service are invaluable to our country.

Expanding the Peace Corps would allow the agency to better meet the demand for its services—requests for Volunteers still far exceed the Peace Corps’ capacity to place them—and to fulfill its important mission. There are currently over 9,000 Volunteers serving in 76 countries and there is no doubt that the agency could effectively deploy more Volunteers and operate in more countries if it had sufficient resources.

Question #6. Staff Support.—A factor in enabling Volunteer effectiveness is strong staff support, including good programming, training, and administration. Is the current number of staff and the ratio of staff to volunteers sufficient to meet Peace Corps needs at this time?

Answer. A healthy, safe, and productive experience is our goal for every Volunteer. The Peace Corps is committed to maintaining high-quality programming, training, and administration at each of its posts.

Staffing numbers and ratios are based on geographic, programmatic, and security considerations, and staff on the ground work closely with headquarters to determine appropriate staffing levels at each post. Through such steps as establishing regional offices and clustering Volunteers in proximity to one another, posts are able to enhance staff support for and interaction with Volunteers. As Peace Corps continues to adjust to the new fiscal environment, the agency will keep working to ensure that staff ratios are optimized to ensure strong support for our Volunteers.

Question #7. Volunteer Diversity.—In FY 2010, 19 percent of Peace Corps Volunteers were ethnic minorities—3 percent African American; 5 percent Asian American; and 6 percent were of Hispanic/Latino origin. More than half of current volunteers—60 percent—were female. Seven percent of Volunteers were over 50. Are you satisfied with the current diversity of Peace Corps Volunteers? If not, what measures would you propose to increase diversity?

Answer. I am committed to ensuring that Peace Corps Volunteers reflect the full diversity of the United States. Peace Corps' Office of Diversity & National Outreach (ODNO) has undertaken a number of initiatives to increase awareness and outreach with respect to diverse communities:

- ODNO conducted diversity recruitment trainings for all of Peace Corps' nine regional recruitment offices. Included in each session was a detailed overview of national and regional diversity recruitment trends and implementable diversity recruitment tactics/strategies.
- ODNO is working with minority Greek letter organizations to organize general information meetings for these academically competitive and service-oriented undergraduate and alumni members. Our goal is to recruit them for Volunteer service.
- We have collaborated with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF), and Hispanic College Fund (HCF) to increase our outreach to the Latino/Hispanic community. Peace Corps has done presentations at their national conferences and we are organizing informational recruitment sessions for their undergraduate populations.
- Regarding Native American/American Indian outreach, our Regional Recruitment Offices are currently evaluating strategic PowWow events to attend. These events are generally multigenerational and thus present an opportunity for Peace Corps recruiters to engage the entire family.
- We are piloting a program in Washington, DC, called "Meet the World" which brings ethnically diverse RPCVs together with prospective Peace Corps applicants. This program has been running for the last 4 months, and the response from the general population and RPCV groups has been tremendous.
- We have begun a number of strategic partnerships with key minority higher education organizations (i.e., UNCF, American Indian Higher Education Consortium, Asian Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund, and HACU).
- For the past 3 years, we have recruited highly experienced individuals for Volunteer service at AARP's national conference.

RESPONSES BY PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR AARON S. WILLIAMS TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question #1. Field staff often spend a significant amount of time fielding demands from headquarters. Some complain that they have little time and authority to do the job they need to be doing at their posts. What is your own assessment of this concern, and what steps if any are you taking to address it?

Answer. Staff at headquarters are responsible for ensuring that the Peace Corps' operations in 76 countries around the world consistently meet agency standards in all programmatic and operational areas. For example:

- The Office of Safety and Security oversees all Peace Corps security programs, both domestically and overseas. The office has more than two dozen staff, including 10 Peace Corps Safety and Security Officers who are based regionally around the world and who provide technical expertise, guidance, and training to Peace Corps posts.
- The Office of Medical Services works to ensure that all Volunteers receive high-quality medical care by, among other things, selecting and managing overseas Peace Corps Medical Officers.
- The Office of Global Operations works to disseminate best practices, provide an organized, cohesive voice to agency leadership, and coordinate the activities of all overseas operations.

In addition, Peace Corps' Office of Inspector General (OIG) regularly audits posts overseas.

The oversight and expertise provided by headquarters staff are not intended to take away from the ability of staff at posts to perform their important work. Rather, they are intended to ensure that all Volunteers are receiving the support they need, and that their work is safe, productive, and rewarding. Particularly when it comes to Volunteer safety and security and medical support, it is essential that agency policies are implemented uniformly across all our posts.

The agency has taken an important step to enhance the authority of staff overseas by pursuing legislation that would permit Peace Corps personal services contractors to perform certain functions they are currently barred from performing, such as serving as cashiers, disbursing money, and contracting for goods and services. This legislative fix is included in the version of S. 1280, the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Vol-

unteer Protection Act of 2011, that the Senate recently approved, and it will provide for greater efficiency and consistency in overseas operations.

Question #2. How do you balance the need for oversight from Washington with the important task of allowing Peace Corps country directors the leeway and flexibility to respond appropriately to country- and region-specific issues?

Answer. Country Directors play a vital role at Peace Corps, and the agency goes to great lengths to hire highly qualified, talented Americans to serve in this capacity. Country Directors are entrusted with significant responsibility, including overall responsibility for the day-to-day management and execution of safety and security programs at post. By performing oversight, staff at headquarters ensure that Country Directors are meeting their responsibilities and adhering to all agency policies and procedures.

The performance of Country Directors is assessed annually, based on performance plans with standardized criteria. The agency uses a number of data points to assess Country Director performance, including the results of annual, anonymous Volunteer surveys, operations plan submissions, and compliance with OIG audit and evaluation findings. Regional Directors at headquarters hold regular calls with their Country Directors to review key performance areas.

S. 1280 includes a requirement that the OIG conduct “an assessment of the implementation of the performance plans” for Country Directors. The agency looks forward to reviewing the results of this assessment.

Question #3. Are you confident that the Peace Corps bureaucracy—as it is currently set up—is flexible and responsive enough to respond to needs around the world in a timely and appropriate manner?

Answer. Improving the agency’s management structure has been one of my priorities since I was sworn in as director in 2009, which is why I hired the agency’s first Director of Innovation and created the Office of Global Operations. Working closely with offices throughout Peace Corps, the Office of Innovation is spearheading efforts to find new, more efficient and effective ways to organize and operate across the agency, as well as to address the recommendations that resulted from the Comprehensive Agency Assessment that Peace Corps submitted to Congress in June 2010. The Office of Global Operations was created to provide overarching strategic support and management to the agency’s direct Volunteer operations.

The agency’s successful evacuation of approximately 100 Volunteers from Niger in a matter of days testifies to the ability of Peace Corps management to respond in a timely and appropriate manner to events around the globe. After two French citizens were kidnapped in the capital of Niger in January 2011, the agency determined, in consultation with the Department of State and the U.S. Embassy, that the risk to Volunteers in-country was too high. The agency took swift and effective action to safely evacuate all Volunteers in Niger to Morocco between January 13 and January 17.