

when he said that when the day was done, says Charlie, the working people knew I was on their side. And the blacks knew I was on their side. It is hard to explain, but there is a tolerance for human frailty that does not exist outside of East Texas.

Charlie Wilson loved his folks, still does today, and will continue; and southeast Texas will never, ever forget him. The fact that we are honoring him there with the naming of this veterans' facility is a magnificent tribute to a wonderful gentleman.

We wish you well in your retirement, Charlie Wilson. I am glad to support my colleagues in supporting this legislation.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of our time.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close with a little story that I read about Charlie Wilson. That was in his first campaign he talks about the fact that at one time when he came back from the Navy and was going to be running for office he thought that there was going to be a discussion about issues regarding taxes. He found out that, and according to the article, the story was that one of the biggest issues in East Texas at that time was that they were using dogs to hunt deer at that time way back in the early 1960s. And they got the impression that Charlie was against that, and they were extremely angry with him and upset. So one of the first things he talks about is going to deliver a speech among 3,000 people and bringing about five or six hounds with him.

So he was and is a very colorful individual. I take pride in being the manager for this bill, and I ask for the naming of the VA clinic in his name and in his honor.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, this is a bipartisan bill. I urge all Members of this body to support H.R. 4317 to name the Lufkin, Texas, VA clinic the Charles Wilson Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4317.

A fellow Texan, Charlie Wilson was educated at the U.S. Naval Academy and served overseas as well as at the Pentagon. After retiring from the Navy in 1960 with the rank of Lieutenant, he returned back to Lufkin and ran successfully for the Texas Legislature, serving in that capacity for twelve years.

In 1972, Charlie was elected as the U.S. Representative for the 2nd Congressional District of Texas and began his distinguished 24-year career in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Naming the Lufkin VA Clinic in honor of Congressman Wilson would be a fitting tribute to such a devoted public servant.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4317.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4317.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

HEALTH, SAFETY, AND SECURITY OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS ACT OF 2004

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4060) to amend the Peace Corps Act to establish an Ombudsman and an Office of Safety and Security of the Peace Corps, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4060

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Health, Safety, and Security of Peace Corps Volunteers Act of 2004".

SEC. 2. OMBUDSMAN OF THE PEACE CORPS.

The Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2501 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 4 the following new section:

"SEC. 4A. OMBUDSMAN OF THE PEACE CORPS.

"(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the Peace Corps the Office of the Ombudsman of the Peace Corps (hereinafter in this section referred to as the 'Office'). The Office shall be headed by the Ombudsman of the Peace Corps (hereinafter in this section referred to as the 'Ombudsman'), who shall be appointed by and report directly to the Director of the Peace Corps.

"(b) VOLUNTEER COMPLAINTS AND OTHER MATTERS.—The Ombudsman shall receive and, as appropriate, inquire into complaints, questions, or concerns submitted by current or former volunteers regarding services or support provided by the Peace Corps to its volunteers, including matters pertaining to—

"(1) the safety and security of volunteers;

"(2) due process, including processes relating to separation from the Peace Corps;

"(3) benefits and assistance that may be due to current or former volunteers;

"(4) medical or other health-related assistance; and

"(5) access to files and records of current or former volunteers.

"(c) EMPLOYEE COMPLAINTS AND OTHER MATTERS.—The Ombudsman shall receive and, as appropriate, inquire into complaints, questions, or concerns submitted by current or former employees of the Peace Corps on any matters of grievance.

"(d) ADDITIONAL DUTIES.—The Ombudsman shall—

"(1) recommend responses to individual matters received under subsections (b) and (c);

"(2) make recommendations for administrative or regulatory adjustments to address recurring problems or other difficulties of the Peace Corps;

"(3) identify systemic issues that relate to the practices, policies, and administrative procedures of the Peace Corps affecting volunteers and employees; and

"(4) call attention to problems not yet adequately considered by the Peace Corps.

"(e) STANDARDS OF OPERATION.—The Ombudsman shall carry out the duties under this section in a manner that is—

"(1) independent, impartial in the conduct of inquiries, and confidential; and

"(2) consistent with the revised Standards for the Establishment and Operation of Ombudsman Offices (August 2003) as endorsed by the American Bar Association.

"(f) INVOLVEMENT IN MATTERS SUBJECT TO ONGOING ADJUDICATION, LITIGATION, OR INVESTIGATION.—The Ombudsman shall refrain from any involvement in the merits of individual matters that are the subject of ongoing adjudication or litigation, or investigations related to such adjudication or litigation.

"(g) REPORTS.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this section, and semiannually thereafter, the Ombudsman shall submit to the Director of the Peace Corps, the Chair of the Peace Corps National Advisory Council, and Congress a report containing a summary of—

"(A) the complaints, questions, and concerns considered by the Ombudsman;

"(B) the inquiries completed by the Ombudsman;

"(C) recommendations for action with respect to such complaints, questions, concerns, or inquiries; and

"(D) any other matters that the Ombudsman considers relevant.

"(2) CONFIDENTIALITY.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall maintain confidentiality on any matter that the Ombudsman considers appropriate in accordance with subsection (e).

"(h) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term 'employee' means an employee of the Peace Corps, an employee of the Office of Inspector General of the Peace Corps, an individual appointed or assigned under the Foreign Service Act of 1980 (22 U.S.C. 3901 et seq.) to carry out functions under this Act, or an individual subject to a personal services contract with the Peace Corps."

SEC. 3. OFFICE OF SAFETY AND SECURITY OF THE PEACE CORPS.

The Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2501 et seq.), as amended by section 2 of this Act, is further amended by inserting after section 4A the following new section:

"SEC. 4B. OFFICE OF SAFETY AND SECURITY OF THE PEACE CORPS.

"(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the Peace Corps the Office of Safety and Security of the Peace Corps (hereinafter in this section referred to as the 'Office'). The Office shall be headed by the Associate Director of Safety and Security of the Peace Corps, who shall be appointed by and report directly to the Director of the Peace Corps.

"(b) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Office established under subsection (a) shall be responsible for all safety and security activities of the Peace Corps, including background checks of volunteers and staff, safety and security of volunteers and staff (including training), safety and security of facilities, security of information technology, and

other responsibilities as required by the Director.

“(c) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

“(1) the Associate Director of Safety and Security of the Peace Corps, as appointed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, should assign a Peace Corps country security coordinator for each country where the Peace Corps has a program of volunteer service for the purposes of carrying out the field responsibilities of the Office established under subsection (a); and

“(2) each country security coordinator—

“(A) should be under the supervision of the Peace Corps country director in each such country;

“(B) should report directly to the Associate Director of Safety and Security of the Peace Corps, as appointed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, on all matters of importance as the country security coordinator considers necessary;

“(C) should be responsible for coordinating with the regional security officer of the Peace Corps responsible for the country to which such country security officer is assigned; and

“(D) should be a United States citizen who has access to information, including classified information, relating to the possible threats against Peace Corps volunteers.”.

SEC. 4. OFFICE OF MEDICAL SERVICES OF THE PEACE CORPS.

(a) REPORT ON MEDICAL SCREENING AND PLACEMENT COORDINATION.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the Peace Corps shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report that—

(1) describes the medical screening procedures and guidelines used by the office responsible for medical services of the Peace Corps to determine whether an applicant for Peace Corps service has worldwide clearance, limited clearance, a deferral period, or is not medically, including psychologically, qualified to serve in the Peace Corps as a volunteer;

(2) describes the procedures and guidelines used by the Peace Corps to ensure that applicants for Peace Corps service are matched with a host country where the applicant, reasonable accommodations notwithstanding, can complete at least two years of volunteer service without interruption due to foreseeable medical conditions; and

(3) with respect to each of the fiscal years 2000 through 2003 and the first six months of fiscal year 2004, states the number of—

(A) medical screenings of applicants conducted;

(B) applicants who have received worldwide clearance, limited clearance, deferral periods, and medical disqualifications to serve;

(C) appeals to the Medical Screening Review Board of the Peace Corps and the number of times that an initial screening decision was upheld;

(D) requests to the head of the office responsible for medical services of the Peace Corps for reconsideration of a decision of the Medical Screening Review Board and the number of times that the decision of the Medical Screening Review Board was upheld by the head of such office;

(E) Peace Corps volunteers who became medically qualified to serve because of a decision of the Medical Screening Review Board and who were later evacuated or terminated their service early due to medical reasons;

(F) Peace Corps volunteers who became medically qualified to serve because of a decision of the head of the office responsible for medical services of the Peace Corps and

who were later evacuated or terminated their service early due to medical reasons;

(G) Peace Corps volunteers who the agency has had to separate from service due to the discovery of undisclosed medical information; and

(H) Peace Corps volunteers who have terminated their service early due to medical, including psychological, reasons.

(b) DEFINITION.—In subsection (a), the term “appropriate congressional committees” means the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate.

(c) FULL TIME DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES.—Section 4(c) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2503(c)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(5) The Director of the Peace Corps shall ensure that the head of the office responsible for medical services of the Peace Corps does not occupy any other position in the Peace Corps.”.

SEC. 5. REPORTS ON THE “FIVE YEAR RULE” AND ON WORK ASSIGNMENTS OF VOLUNTEERS OF THE PEACE CORPS.

(a) REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the effects of the limitation on the duration of employment, appointment, or assignment of officers and employees of the Peace Corps under section 7 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2506) on the ability of the Peace Corps to effectively manage Peace Corps operations.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report described in paragraph (1) shall include—

(A) a description of such limitation;

(B) a description of the history of such limitation and the purposes for which it was enacted and amended;

(C) an analysis of the impact of such limitation on the ability of the Peace Corps to recruit capable volunteers, establish productive and worthwhile assignments for volunteers, provide for the health, safety, and security of volunteers, and, as declared in section 2(a) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2501(a)), “promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served and a better understanding of other peoples on the part of the American people”;

(D) an assessment of whether the application of such limitation has accomplished the objectives for which it was intended; and

(E) recommendations, if any, for legislation to amend provisions of the Peace Corps Act relating to such limitation.

(b) REPORT ON WORK ASSIGNMENTS OF VOLUNTEERS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the Peace Corps shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the extent to which the work assignments of Peace Corps volunteers fulfill the commitment of the Peace Corps to ensuring that such assignments are well developed, with clear roles and expectations, and that volunteers are well-suited for their assignments.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report described in paragraph (1) shall include—

(A) an assessment of the extent to which agreements between the Peace Corps and host countries delineate clear roles for volunteers in assisting host governments to advance their national development strategies;

(B) an assessment of the extent to which the Peace Corps recruits volunteers who have skills that correlate with the expectations cited in the country agreements and assigns such volunteers to such posts;

(C) a description of procedures for determining volunteer work assignments and minimum standards for such assignments;

(D) a volunteer survey on health, safety, and security issues as well as satisfaction surveys which will have been conducted after the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(E) an assessment of the plan of the Peace Corps to increase the number of volunteers who are assigned to projects in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and the Western Hemisphere, particularly among communities of African descent within countries in the Western Hemisphere, which help combat HIV/AIDS and other global infectious diseases.

(c) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate.

SEC. 6. INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE PEACE CORPS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF INDEPENDENT INSPECTOR GENERAL.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended—

(A) in section 8G(a)(2), by striking “, the Peace Corps”;

(B) in section 9(a)(1), by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

“(X) of the Peace Corps, the office of that agency referred to as the ‘Office of Inspector General’; and”;

(C) in section 11—

(i) in paragraph (1), by striking “or the Office of Personnel Management” and inserting “the Office of Personnel Management, or the Peace Corps”; and

(ii) in paragraph (2), by inserting “, the Peace Corps” after “the Office of Personnel Management”.

(2) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section 9(a)(1)(U) of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended by striking “and” at the end.

(b) TEMPORARY APPOINTMENT.—The Director of the Peace Corps may appoint an individual to assume the powers and duties of the Inspector General of the Peace Corps under the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.) on an interim basis until such time as a person is appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, pursuant to the amendments made in this section.

(c) EXEMPTION FROM EMPLOYMENT TERM LIMITS UNDER THE PEACE CORPS ACT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 7 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2506) is amended—

(A) by redesignating subsection (c) as subsection (b); and

(B) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(c) The provisions of this section that limit the duration of service, appointment, or assignment of individuals shall not apply to—

“(1) the Inspector General of the Peace Corps;

“(2) officers of the Office of the Inspector General of the Peace Corps;

“(3) any individual whose official duties primarily include the safety and security of Peace Corps volunteers or employees;

“(4) the head of the office responsible for medical services of the Peace Corps; or

“(5) any health care professional within the office responsible for medical services of the Peace Corps.”.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The first proviso of section 15(d)(4) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2514(d)(4)) is amended by striking “7(c)” and inserting “7(b)”.

(d) COMPENSATION.—Section 7 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2506), as amended by subsection (c) of this section, is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(d) The Inspector General of the Peace Corps shall be compensated at the rate provided for level IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5315 of title 5, United States Code.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Health, Safety, and Security of Peace Corps Volunteers Act of 2004.

□ 1530

The members of the Committee on International Relations received testimony in March at an important oversight hearing on the Peace Corps. We heard about some of the past problems and current problems the Peace Corps faces as it expands the number of volunteers around the world while at the same time taking into account the changed circumstances for American citizens living abroad during the post-September 11 period.

I am a very strong, long-time supporter of the Peace Corps. My colleagues and I who are strong supporters of the Peace Corps admire the sacrifice and important work that these volunteers do. We want to ensure through this legislation that the Peace Corps has the necessary procedures in place to protect our Nation's sons and daughters, or parents and grandparents, who dedicate 2 years of their lives to improving the circumstances of the peoples of the developing world.

Mr. Speaker, at the March hearing we inquired into the adequacy of safety and security practices that govern volunteer assignments in more dangerous places around the world. We found that in Bolivia in 2001 the Peace Corps did not have in place the necessary management procedures to monitor or to account for a missing volunteer named Walter Poirier. We learned that the Poirier family of Lowell, Massachusetts, had to notify the Peace Corps that their son was missing. We understand from the General Accounting Office that the Peace Corps has taken important steps to remedy some of these problems, but still there is room for improvement.

H.R. 4060 is intended to prepare the Peace Corps for expansion in a more dangerous world. The bill makes a number of important changes to the Peace Corps Act.

The legislation creates the position of ombudsman to receive and inquire into complaints, questions or concerns raised by current or former volunteers or employees regarding services or support provided by the Peace Corps. The legislation statutorily creates an Office of Safety and Security within the Peace Corps to be headed by an Associate Director for Safety and Security who shall be responsible for all safety and security activities of the Peace Corps.

This bill requires a report on the medical screening procedures and guidelines used by the Peace Corps to determine whether an applicant is medically and psychologically qualified to serve in the Peace Corps as a volunteer. The legislation also requires a report by the Comptroller General on the “5-year rule” which was cited by the GAO in previous reports as one of the reasons for an unacceptably high degree of staff turnover and loss of institutional memory, especially on safety and security matters.

The legislation also creates a more independent Inspector General of the Peace Corps, exempting that individual and the staff of the I.G. from the 5-year rule, and creating more accountable oversight by this committee through increased access to information from the I.G. on all matters relating to the management of the Peace Corps.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation responds to the concerns addressed by our witnesses last week and also responds to the concerns raised by current and former volunteers who have contacted the committee to discuss their experience with the Peace Corps. I ask support for this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say, Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this legislation; and I urge my colleagues to do so as well.

First, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), the ranking member, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH). I want to thank all of them for their very strong interest and support of the Peace Corps, its nearly 8,000 volunteers and the larger Peace Corps community.

Now, last year, Mr. Speaker, the House of Representatives approved the Peace Corps Expansion Act, which is designed to double the size of the Peace Corps and to increase its effectiveness overseas.

The legislation before us today builds upon this important initiative by focusing on the need to improve the safety and the security of our Peace Corps volunteers. While most Peace Corps volunteers have a safe and positive experience, the General Accounting Office testified before the committee that volunteers under-reported crimes against them in part due to the belief

that the Peace Corps lacks the capacity or the willingness to help.

The GAO and the other witnesses also testified that the lack of well-developed assignments really discourages volunteers from adequately immersing themselves in their host communities and thereby benefiting from the protections afforded to members from these villages and also those towns.

Finally, the witnesses noted that the administrative impediments such as limitations on terms of employment within the Peace Corps and worrisome changes within the Office of Medical Services constrain Peace Corps employees from providing the best possible support to volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, the bill that we are considering today addresses these issues by establishing an ombudsman within the agency to listen and to attend to volunteer and employee concerns by increasing the independence of the Inspector General of the Peace Corps to strengthen his ability or her ability to act as a watchdog on behalf of volunteers, also by requiring the agency to study and to report to us on how it can improve programming for volunteers and by lifting the term limits for key offices within the agency. I strongly support all of these provisions.

Now, just as I support this bill to enhance the security and well-being of the volunteers, I also might mention support for legislation which I have introduced to create a special postage stamp through the Peace Stamp Act which calls for the creation of a stamp, the revenues from which would send money to the Peace Corps. This stamp would help provide funding, badly needed funding, for the increased Peace Corps force that President Bush has called for. This bill, H.R. 4060, which we have before us today, will help us ensure the well-being of an expanded Peace Corps.

Mr. Speaker, we must not lose sight of the fact that Peace Corps volunteers for over 40 years have been doing extraordinary jobs as our development ambassadors to the most remote centers of the world. They have truly been our very best ambassadors; and they have been doing their jobs, quite frankly, under very difficult and oftentimes very risky conditions. However, as we consider measures to improve the health, safety and security of our volunteers, we must be careful not to forge shields around our volunteers which will make it harder for them to reach the young English student, for example, in Central Asia or the Women's Cooperative in Peru and to reach and really pursue their own growth and development. So there is this very delicate balance that we must meet and we must put together, and I believe this bill does that.

I strongly support passage of this legislation and urge my colleagues to do so as well.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR), a good friend, a great leader in this

House, a former Peace Corps volunteer who served in Colombia and who knows the Peace Corps backwards and forwards and who has provided many years of service not only in this body but in many legislative bodies, and I think especially and most importantly for us today as our Peace Corps volunteer.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) for yielding me time and for allowing me to join her on the floor today. I want to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) and members of the committee for allowing me to attend the hearing that led to the markup of this bill.

I served in the Peace Corps, and it holds a really special place in my heart, as it does for four other Members of Congress who are also return Peace Corps volunteers. Our colleagues, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS), the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI), the gentleman from California (Mr. HONDA) and myself all are return Peace Corps volunteers.

In the 1960s I spent 2 years serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia, South America. My experience as a Peace Corps volunteer helped me to motivate my life to public service and I think helped shape me into the person I am today. And there are tens and tens of thousands of Americans who have served in the Peace Corps in over 130 countries throughout the world and who have had similar experiences.

The vast majority of the return Peace Corps volunteers agree with the sentiment that the Peace Corps experience was the toughest job they ever loved. Peace Corps not only benefits individual Americans, but it also helps the developing world and makes the world a bit safer one volunteer at a time. The important community-based jobs the Peace Corps volunteers perform are instrumental in helping to bring about greater peace and security in the world. Not only are PCVs helping people in developing countries overcome poverty, one of the root causes of terrorism, they are also showing the world a different, friendlier face of what Americans are really like.

Peace Corps volunteers live, eat and work amongst the people in countries from Albania to Zambia. In this type of environment, where a Peace Corps volunteer is teaching hand washing to a child or computer literacy to a brother, the realization quickly dawns on the people, regardless of their nationality, that we have more similarities than differences. This people-to-people interaction is the real recipe for creating more peace and stability in the world.

Today we are discussing the Health, Safety and Security of Peace Corps Volunteers Act of 2004, which tries to improve the safety of volunteers who can sometime serve in isolated areas of

the world. H.R. 4060 addresses some important issues and tries to increase the safety and oversight of the Peace Corps.

I am very pleased that this bill does not mandate that volunteers must be paired together in communities. The best security measure for Peace Corps volunteers is for them to integrate quickly into their communities. Pairing volunteers would impede I think in this integration into the host country.

My major concern with H.R. 4060, though, is that the safety and security measures should not take away from the important existing budgetary requirements of the Peace Corps. Let me end by reminding this body that in the currently constricted budget environment we need to carefully allocate our resources. Just recently, General Abizaid, who is head of the Middle East, let our Committee on Appropriations know that he thought America would never be able to have world peace until we were able to cross the cultural divides.

I cannot think of any better investment that the United States Congress can make than to fully fund the Peace Corps as the President has requested in his State of the Union Address. What he asked was to double the size of the Peace Corps, which we have, but now we have failed to meet the President's demands on what it will take to do that. That is a very bad mistake at this time in the history of the United States.

I am glad the Congress is concerned with the safety of volunteers, but I urge each of our Members, when it comes to the appropriations process, let us meet the President's request. Let us fully fund the Peace Corps. Let us indeed teach America how to cross the cultural divide and create world peace forever.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I will close for our side with just these few comments. I want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR) for his comments and for his really deep and abiding commitment to the Peace Corps.

I will say that I have had the privilege since I guess about 1980 to travel and meet with Peace Corps volunteers throughout the world. What I have witnessed in terms of their level of commitment, their level of understanding of their work and their real commitment not only to their region or their community or their village where they are working but really to the entire world is really phenomenal; and I want to support the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR) in his position and his comment that we need to fully fund the Peace Corps at the levels that the administration has requested.

Having said that, let me just say how important this measure is today. Those Peace Corps volunteers who are out there, as I said earlier, representing our country, they are really our best ambassadors; and, minimally, we

should provide for every bit of security and safety that they need, everything that they need to make their job not only rewarding but safe so that they can return and really share their experiences with those who have not had the opportunity to volunteer abroad and help develop even an expanded and larger Peace Corps force.

Let me thank everyone for their support of this bill for ensuring that it is a bipartisan bill.

Mr. Speaker, we have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) for managing the bill for the Democrats and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) for his work in crafting this legislation. I especially want to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) for authoring this very important piece of legislation to make sure to the greatest extent possible that U.S. professionals—of all ages—who are deployed abroad as part of the Peace Corps, one of the finest U.S. initiatives ever created, get the best possible protection and security. We need to provide them protection, that is second to none, so that they can be safe and secure.

□ 1545

Obviously, when people are deployed to dangerous areas, there are risks that are associated with that commitment. Still, it is up to this Congress, the State Department, and the administration, to ensure that no stone is left unturned in trying to make sure that Peace Corps volunteers are safe and secure in that environment.

No bill comes to this floor without a tremendous amount of work by very competent staff, and Peter Smith has helped to draft this legislation. I want to thank him especially for his fine work and his skill and expertise in drafting this bill, as well as Paul Oostburg for his work on it as well.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to support H.R. 4060.

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4060—the Health, Safety, and Security of Peace Corps Volunteers Act of 2004.

This important measure amends the Peace Corps Act to establish the Office of the Ombudsman of the Peace Corps. This office will have the important role of addressing complaints or concerns regarding services or support provided by the Peace Corps to its Volunteers. The measure also establishes the Office of Safety and Security of the Peace Corps, which as the title of the section implies, will be responsible for safety and security activities of the Peace Corps.

The Peace Corps' mission of compassion, skill-sharing and diplomacy is more important today than ever before to our global village. As many parts of the world become an increasingly dangerous place to carry out this mission, we must do all we can to provide safety and security for our Volunteers.

Since 1961, Peace Corps Volunteers have strengthened the ties of friendship and understanding between the people of the United States and those of other countries. Some one hundred and seventy thousand volunteers have served in 137 countries over the past 43 years to make an impact on this world. We owe it to these Volunteers to create avenues for their concerns to be heard.

I am proud to say that as a young man, I served as a Volunteer in the Republic of El Salvador, building schools and health clinics, learning the language, and developing an enduring bond with the people, culture, and language. The experience instilled in me a profound connection to that country, and a dedication to improving international relations around the world.

Over the past 43 years, the Peace Corps has become an enduring symbol of our nation's commitment to progress, opportunity, and development at the grass-roots level in the developing world.

Mr. Speaker, the Peace Corps has been a part of my life for almost forty years. I have served as a Volunteer, I have supported important Peace Corps legislation and today I rise in support of the Health, Safety, and Security of Peace Corps Volunteers Act of 2004.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of our time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4060.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2003

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 265) to provide for an adjustment of the boundaries of Mount Rainier National Park, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 265

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Mount Rainier National Park Boundary Adjustment Act of 2003".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds the following:

(1) The Carbon River watershed within Pierce County in the State of Washington has unique qualities of ecological, economic, and educational importance, including clean water, productive salmon streams, important wildlife habitat, active geologic processes, outdoor recreational opportunities, scenic beauty, educational opportunities, and diverse economic opportunities.

(2) Mount Rainier National Park is one of the premier attractions in the State of Washington, providing recreational, educational, and economic opportunities that will be enhanced by

the construction of new campgrounds and visitor contact facilities in the Carbon River valley outside old-growth forest habitats and above the flood plain.

(3) *Coordination of management across national forest and national park lands in this corridor will enhance the conservation of the forest ecosystem and public enjoyment of these public lands.*

(4) *Protection and development of historic and recreational facilities in the Carbon River valley, such as trails and visitor centers, can be facilitated by the National Park Service.*

SEC. 3. MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT.

(a) *BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT.—The boundary of Mount Rainier National Park is modified to include the area within the boundary generally depicted on the map entitled "Mount Rainier National Park, Carbon River Boundary Adjustment", numbered 105/92,002B, and dated June 2003. The Secretary of the Interior shall keep the map on file in the appropriate offices of the National Park Service.*

(b) *LAND ACQUISITION.—The Secretary of the Interior may acquire, only with the consent of the owner, by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange—*

(1) land or interests in land, totaling not more than 800 acres, and improvements thereon within the boundary generally depicted on the map referred to in subsection (a) for development of camping and other recreational facilities; and

(2) land or interests in land, totaling not more than one acre, and improvements thereon in the vicinity of Wilkeson, Washington, for a facility to serve visitors to public lands along the Carbon and Mowich Corridors.

(c) *ADMINISTRATION OF ACQUIRED LANDS.—Lands acquired under this section shall be administered by the Secretary of the Interior as part of Mount Rainier National Park in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.*

SEC. 4. ASSOCIATED LANDS.

The Secretary of Agriculture shall manage that portion of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest lying adjacent to Mt. Rainier National Park, as identified on the map referred to in section 3(a), to maintain the area's natural setting in a manner consistent with its management as of June 1, 2003.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 265, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Nevada?

There was no objection.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 265, introduced by the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. DUNN) and amended by the Committee on Resources, would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to adjust the boundary of the Mount Rainier National Park by creating a new non-contiguous unit to the park. The new area would provide for improved camping opportunities near the northwest entrance of the park, while ensuring

continued access for the Muckleshoot Tribe to nearby U.S. Forest Service lands.

Today, the only road leading to the current popular campgrounds in the northwestern portion of the park continues to be flooded out by the Carbon River. I believe this bill represents a commonsense solution to this ongoing problem.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 265, as amended, is supported by both the majority and minority members of the committee, as well as the Muckleshoot Tribe and the National Park Service. I commend the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. DUNN) for her tireless efforts to work with all parties concerned to reach the consensus that is before us on the House floor today.

That said, Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. RODRIGUEZ asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, the majority has adequately explained this piece of legislation.

I would simply note that H.R. 265, as amended, represents a cooperative effort among the bill's sponsors, the Committee on Resources and the National Park Service and the Forest Service.

The bill, as amended, is a workable solution to the resource management needs in the area, and we support the adoption of this legislation by the House today.

Ms. DUNN. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 265, The Mount Rainier Boundary Adjustment Act of 2003, will allow the National Park Service to relocate a popular campground that has limited access as the result of road damage caused by years of reoccurring floods. The road to Ipsut Creek Campground in Mount Rainier National Park is now located below the level of the Carbon River in many areas. Due to frequent road washouts, it can be difficult—if not impossible—for visitors and residents to drive safely to the campground.

There have been numerous attempts to repair this road—but, unfortunately, it continues to wash out. Previous road reconstruction after flooding has cost \$750,000.

The road to the campground serves as one of the most primitive and popular entrances into Mount Rainier Park and leads to a temperate rainforest within the park as well as the beautiful Carbon Glacier.

This boundary adjustment will allow for the purchase of approximately 800 acres of private land just outside the park, allowing the campground to be moved to a more secure area and providing safe travel to the site. All of the private landowners are willing sellers, and this vital project is currently included in the National Park Service Management Plan. It has the strong support of the local residents, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and numerous conservation organizations.

The Congressional Budget Office released a favorable estimate for this project—stating that