



June 29, 2011

The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen –Chairman  
The Honorable Howard Berman – Ranking Member  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

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*The Next Step in Changing the World*

Dear Chairman Ros-Lehtinen and Ranking Member Berman:

The National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) is the nation's leading 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization supporting Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV) and the Peace Corps community through networking and mentoring to help guide former Volunteers through their continued service back home. With 146 member groups and more than 50,000 supporters, it is also the longest-standing advocate for an independent and robust Peace Corps and its values. Given our mission and membership, a particular focus is to support volunteers during and after their service.

NPCA applauds congressional leaders, Director Williams, RPCV survivors and experts in the field for their work in preparing legislation (H.R. 2337; S. 1280) designed to strengthen Peace Corps' response and support for victims of violence and sexual assault.

NPCA supports this legislation in its current form, contingent upon the bill remaining focused on matters pertaining to the health and safety of the volunteers.

We also would like to express our concern that the Peace Corps must have the resources required to carry out the provisions of the legislation. The implementation of improved safety and security measures should not come at the expense of other parts of Peace Corps programming. It is our hope that the champions of this legislation will help secure the funding Peace Corps needs to implement these safety and security measures while also sustaining its current mission and activities. We would object vigorously to any provisions that would further reduce funding for the Peace Corps. As one of the witnesses at the May 11<sup>th</sup> hearing said, "I would be devastated if my testimony were used to stop Peace Corps funding, cut funding, or eliminate the Peace Corps."

We offer two recommendations to address potential future developments, while maintaining the focus and integrity of the legislation.

- 1) The lead Victims Advocate's role should be expanded slightly to include other significant health and safety issues. For example, the Advocate should also be a resource for the family of a volunteer missing in service, a volunteer with mental health needs triggered by a non-violent event, or a volunteer seriously injured in service.
- 2) Although we strongly support an external group meeting regularly with the Peace Corps on issues of sexual assault, we believe that the name "Advisory Council" should be reserved for the National Advisory Council outlined in the original Peace Corps Act. In his FY 2012 Budget Justification, Director Williams expressed his interest in reviving the National Advisory Council. We strongly encourage the revitalization of this high-powered, bi-partisan Advisory Council, which should serve as essential forum in addressing critical issues for the Peace Corps and its community, including safety and security.

Thank you for considering this letter. We look forward to working with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin F. F. Quigley".

Kevin F. F. Quigley – President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jan M. Guifarro".

Jan Guifarro – Board of Directors Chair