



Peace Corps Funding

Background Information and Talking Points

Our Request to Congress

- **No Less Than Level Funding for the Peace Corps:** While the Peace Corps is worthy of a funding increase to reach its full potential, at the very least Congress needs to fund the agency at its present level (\$430.5 million) for the next fiscal year (FY 2026).
- **Support the President's Request:** In June, the Trump administration's request to Congress included level funding – \$430.5 million – for the Peace Corps. Our request to members of Congress – particularly Republican members – is that they support no less than the president's Fiscal Year 2026 Peace Corps funding request.

Background

- Within the international affairs programs of our federal budget, there is a line item for the Peace Corps. The federal fiscal year runs from October 1st through September 30.
- Congress is now working on federal spending for Fiscal Year 2026, which begins this coming October 1st.
- President Trump's FY 2026 budget to Congress includes level funding – \$430.5 million – for the Peace Corps.
- For the current fiscal year (FY 2025), which began October 1, 2024, Congress completed work this past March on funding for the Peace Corps and other federal programs. Congress passed a "continuing resolution" to fund the government through the end of the fiscal year.
- Under a "continuing resolution" which keeps the federal government operating, the Peace Corps remains funded at a level equivalent to the last approved (FY 2024) funding level of \$430.5 million.
- For Democrats in the Senate: Back in May, nearly 75% of the Democrats in the Senate, including more than two-thirds of the Democrats who serve on the Appropriations Committee, signed an annual Peace Corps funding letter which requested a funding increase for the agency (to \$479 million). You can [use this link](#) to see if your Senator(s) signed the letter.
- Similarly, for Democrats in the House: Back in May, nearly 60% of House Democrats, and almost two-thirds of House Democrats who don't serve on the appropriations committee,

signed an annual Peace Corps funding letter which requested a funding increase for the agency (\$479 million). You can [use this link](#) to see if your House member signed the letter.

- After his confirmation in January, 2025 as the new U.S. Secretary of State, Marco Rubio outlined three criteria that will be used when considering funding for international affairs programs: 1) Does the program make the United States stronger? 2) Does it make the United States safer? 3) Does it make the United States more prosperous?
- In early April, the so-called “Department of Government Efficiency” (DOGE) entered Peace Corps headquarters. In the aftermath, there were significant cuts (or retirements) within the agency, both here at home and overseas.
- Approximately 3,000 individuals are currently serving in the Peace Corps, in nearly 60 countries. While the number of volunteers serving remains below half the size prior to the pandemic, countries of Peace Corps service have been near/at pre-pandemic levels.
- Since 1961, nearly a quarter million volunteers and staff have served in the Peace Corps in more than 140 nations. Collectively, **Peace Corps Volunteers have provided well over one billion hours of service to our nation.**

Key Talking Points

(PLEASE NOTE: You do not have to memorize these points. We offer these detailed, various talking points so you can pick and choose the ones that most resonate with you – and which may resonate most with the offices you meet).

- **The Three Key Criteria:** As you prepare for your meetings, consider personal experiences or stories you can share that demonstrates the Peace Corps’ ability to meet any of the three criteria (stronger, safer, more prosperous) outlined by Secretary of State Rubio. You can also consider the talking points below.
- **The Peace Corps Makes Our Country Stronger:** A 2023 survey of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) found that 86% of respondents remain active volunteers in their communities, well more than double the national average (nearly 30% according to a 2023 Americorps/Census Bureau survey). Thousands of these RPCVs serve in leadership roles, helping their communities thrive.
- **The Peace Corps Makes Our Country Safer:** By working in sectors such as health, food security, and education, Peace Corps Volunteers strengthen and stabilize communities around the world (and here at home), lowering prospects for mass migration. Over the seven decades of service, volunteers have built lasting and enduring friendships and respect with tens of millions of people around the world, who have gotten to know Americans in a very personal manner. And, in 2013, General James Mattis issued this quote which referenced the State Department in particular, but also applies to the Peace Corps and other foreign development and diplomacy initiatives: “If you don’t fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition ultimately.”
- **The Peace Corps Makes Our Country More Prosperous:** A 2023 survey on the Peace Corps’ return on investment for the American taxpayer found that among the more than 4,000 respondents, nearly 25% said they started one or more successful business

ventures, with the collective economic impact estimated to be between \$752 million and \$1.1 billion.

- **In Other Words...Emphasize the Impacts of Peace Corps Service Here at Home:** It is always important to remind lawmakers that Peace Corps service is much more than 27 months overseas. Share the significance of the ongoing commitment to service that RPCVs provide.
- **Reverse Serious Staff Reductions:** Peace Corps is traditionally one of the leanest agencies in the federal government, and a healthy rotation of staff positions is built into the Peace Corps Act, limiting some staff to 5 year terms at the agency. This is not a typically staffed federal agency, and the Peace Corps desperately needs Congressional, OMB and OPM clearance to meet urgent staffing needs.
- **Staff Recruitment and Placement:** Just one example of the devastating staff reductions is a two-thirds reduction in recruitment and placement staff. The recruitment of prospective volunteers is much more complicated and detailed than the process a company takes to hire a new employee. The recruitment and placement of volunteers fuels the future of the Peace Corps, which in turn fuels the future of RPCV affiliate groups all around the country when those volunteers return from service.
- **National Service Brings Us Together:** While our country faces serious challenges and divisions, service opportunities bring people together. If you have an anecdote that reflects how service or your post-Peace Corps volunteer efforts has allowed you to connect with various communities or bridge divides, please consider sharing that with a congressional office.
- **So Much, For So Little:** While fiscal conservatives strongly urge for a reduction in federal spending, our entire international affairs programs represent less than one percent of our federal budget. And – within our international affairs programs – Peace Corps accounts for less than one percent of that budget! For all of the good that the Peace Corps does, reducing funding will have no meaningful impact on federal spending.
- **Share Your Peace Corps Story:** While facts and figures are important, Members of Congress and/or their staff also benefit greatly when they hear about your personal Peace Corps experience. However, as time is limited, you will need to keep your personal Peace Corps reflections short.

Other Talking Points

- **The Peace Corps and Controlling Federal Deficits:** Over the past ten years, the Peace Corps has had to operate with only a (recent) five percent increase in its congressional appropriation. (You could pose the question...What companies or individuals are being successful with only a five percent increase in their finances over the past decade?)
- **Peace Corps' Budget Has Lost Purchasing Power Over The Past Decade Due to Limited Funding:** Peace Corps was funded at \$410 million in Fiscal Year 2016. Current funding of \$430.5 million has not kept up with inflation. When adjusted for inflation, the FY 2016 equivalent level of funding at this time should be more than \$550 million. The Peace Corps has lost approximately 25% of its purchasing power during the past decade.

- **Accelerating the Return to Service:** It is now more than two years since Peace Corps Volunteers began returning to service. Now, the first post-pandemic volunteers have completed their service, and more than 3,000 Volunteers and Trainees have returned to service in more than 60 countries. This is still below the roughly 7,000 volunteers serving before the pandemic.
- **Infrastructure Costs in Countries are Most Significant:** While the number of volunteers is still lower than pre-pandemic levels, the number of countries where volunteers are serving has reached pre-pandemic levels. This is important because infrastructure costs (office space and daily operational needs, transportation, safety and security, volunteer health care support, staffing) have extremely large start-up/resumption costs). And, (for example), a doubling of the number of volunteers in a country will not result in a doubling of country costs, as the existing infrastructure could likely absorb additional volunteers..
- **Indo-Pacific Expansion:** There has been bi-partisan interest in expanding Peace Corps programs in the Pacific region. In its FY 2025 budget request, Peace Corps requested nearly \$6 million for expanding Peace Corps programs in the Indo-Pacific region. In 2024, the Peace Corps announced plans to return to the Republic of Palau in 2025. At the same time, at least four other Pacific Island nations (Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands) have formally requested the return of volunteers. If Congress is serious about expanding Peace Corps presence in the Pacific, it needs to invest in those operations. To expect otherwise would be irresponsible.
- **Americans Support Federal Volunteer Service Programs:** A January 2021 poll conducted by Change Research for Service Year Alliance found 77 percent of those polled support expansion of service opportunities such as Peace Corps and AmeriCorps. Majorities of Democrats (93 percent), Republicans (59 percent), and Independents (77 percent) all supported national service expansion.
- **Say Thank You!:** Go to the NPCA website and visit our State Resources page (Go to Advocacy/Resources/State Resources) to find profiles for every member of Congress. See if you can thank them for previous, positive actions in support of the Peace Corps! These pages will also provide you with figures on the number of Peace Corps Volunteers from your state currently (an approximate number which is always changing), and since 1961.