

110TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 732

To empower Peace Corps volunteers, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 1, 2007

Mr. DODD (for himself and Mr. KENNEDY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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## A BILL

To empower Peace Corps volunteers, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Peace Corps Volunteer  
5 Empowerment Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

7       The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title.
- Sec. 2. Table of contents.

TITLE I—PROMOTION OF PEACE CORPS PROJECTS AND GOALS

- Sec. 101. Seed funding for volunteer projects.
- Sec. 102. Charitable fundraising by Peace Corps volunteers.
- Sec. 103. Programs and projects of returned Peace Corps volunteers to promote the goals of the Peace Corps.
- Sec. 104. Recruitment of experienced volunteers.

Sec. 105. Digital Peace Corps.

#### TITLE II—EMPOWERMENT OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

Sec. 201. Participation of Peace Corps volunteers in reviews of senior staff and programs.

Sec. 202. Volunteer Advisory Committees.

Sec. 203. Input of volunteers regarding site selection and training curriculum.

#### TITLE III—PERSONNEL ISSUES AND BENEFITS

Sec. 301. Reforms to medical screening process.

Sec. 302. Health insurance coverage for retirees who serve as Peace Corps volunteers.

Sec. 303. Report on costs associated with extending post-service health coverage.

Sec. 304. Sense of Congress on need for special rule for Peace Corps volunteers and employees in determining exclusion of gain from sale of principal residence.

Sec. 305. Treasury guidance regarding tax deductions.

Sec. 306. Protecting rights of Peace Corps volunteers.

Sec. 307. Financial guide for Peace Corps volunteers and applicants.

#### TITLE IV—AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

Sec. 401. Authorization of appropriations.

## 1 **TITLE I—PROMOTION OF PEACE** 2 **CORPS PROJECTS AND GOALS**

### 3 **SEC. 101. SEED FUNDING FOR VOLUNTEER PROJECTS.**

4 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-  
5 ings:

6 (1) The Peace Corps is an agency focused on  
7 grassroots, bottom-up development.

8 (2) Seed funding for local demonstration  
9 projects is crucial to the success of Peace Corps vol-  
10 unteers.

11 (3) Demonstration projects are a very effective  
12 method for Peace Corps volunteers to educate people  
13 in host countries.

1 (b) FUNDING.—There is authorized to be appro-  
2 priated up to 1 percent of the total amount appropriated  
3 for the Peace Corps for fiscal year 2008 and each fiscal  
4 year thereafter for seed funding for Peace Corps volun-  
5 teers to carry out demonstration projects that have been  
6 approved in advance by the Peace Corps Country Director  
7 in the country where the volunteer is serving.

8 (c) SEED FUND AWARDS.—

9 (1) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—The Director of  
10 the Peace Corps shall determine at the beginning of  
11 each fiscal year the amount of funding that will be  
12 available as seed money for demonstration projects  
13 for that fiscal year and inform each Country Direc-  
14 tor of the portion of that amount that will be avail-  
15 able to distribute to volunteers under the supervision  
16 of such Country Director.

17 (2) AWARDING OF FUNDS.—The Director of the  
18 Peace Corps shall promulgate rules pursuant to  
19 which each Country Director may award seed funds  
20 made available under this section to eligible Peace  
21 Corp volunteers.

22 (3) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible for a seed  
23 fund award under this subsection, a Peace Corps  
24 volunteer shall—

1 (A) submit to the Country Director of the  
2 country where the volunteer is serving a plan  
3 for a demonstration project, including an expla-  
4 nation of how the demonstration project will  
5 lead to sustainable development; and

6 (B) make a written attestation that funds  
7 awarded under this subsection are utilized for  
8 the purposes specified in the plan.

9 (4) AMOUNT OF AWARDS.—A seed fund award  
10 provided to a volunteer under this subsection may  
11 not exceed \$1,000.

12 (5) REPORT.—Each Peace Corps volunteer who  
13 receives a seed fund award under this subsection  
14 shall submit to the Country Director of the country  
15 where the volunteer is serving before the close of  
16 such volunteer's service a report on the demonstra-  
17 tion project funded by the award.

18 **SEC. 102. CHARITABLE FUNDRAISING BY PEACE CORPS**

19 **VOLUNTEERS.**

20 (a) SENSE OF CONGRESS ON ASSISTANCE IN FUND-  
21 RAISING.—It is the sense of Congress that Peace Corps  
22 volunteers should apply for grants and loans from non-  
23 governmental organizations to carry out demonstration  
24 projects, including by partnering with governmental and

1 nongovernmental agencies and working with host country  
2 nationals.

3 (b) FUNDRAISING BY VOLUNTEERS.—

4 (1) AUTHORITY.—

5 (A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subpara-  
6 graph (B), Peace Corps volunteers are author-  
7 ized to solicit contributions for demonstration  
8 projects from persons personally known to  
9 them, including family members, friends, and  
10 members of their home community in the  
11 United States, and from government and non-  
12 governmental agencies, including by working  
13 through the Peace Corps Partnership Program.  
14 Any such solicitation shall state the demonstra-  
15 tion project or projects to which contributed  
16 funds will be applied.

17 (B) REQUIRED APPROVAL.—A Peace  
18 Corps volunteer shall seek and receive advance  
19 approval from the Country Director of the  
20 country where the volunteer is serving before  
21 exercising the authority under subparagraph  
22 (A).

23 (2) ACCOUNTABILITY.—Peace Corps volunteers  
24 receiving contributions pursuant to the authority  
25 under paragraph (1) shall—

1 (A) maintain records and receipts to con-  
 2 firm the proper application of contributed  
 3 funds; and

4 (B) ensure that such funds are expended  
 5 solely for the demonstration project or projects  
 6 for which they were intended.

7 **SEC. 103. PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS OF RETURNED PEACE**  
 8 **CORPS VOLUNTEERS TO PROMOTE THE**  
 9 **GOALS OF THE PEACE CORPS.**

10 (a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to pro-  
 11 vide support for returned Peace Corps volunteers to de-  
 12 velop and carry out programs and projects to promote the  
 13 third purpose of the Peace Corps Act, as set forth in sec-  
 14 tion 2(a) of that Act (22 U.S.C. 2501(a)), relating to pro-  
 15 moting an understanding of other peoples on the part of  
 16 the American people.

17 (b) GRANTS TO CERTAIN NONPROFIT CORPORATIONS  
 18 AND RETURNED PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS.—

19 (1) GRANT AUTHORITY.—The Director of the  
 20 Peace Corps shall award grants on a competitive  
 21 basis to private nonprofit corporations and returned  
 22 Peace Corps volunteers for the purpose of enabling  
 23 returned Peace Corps volunteers to use their knowl-  
 24 edge and expertise to develop programs and projects  
 25 to carry out the purpose described in subsection (a).

1           (2) PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS.—The programs  
2           and projects that may receive grant funds under this  
3           section include—

4                   (A) educational programs designed to en-  
5                   rich the knowledge and interest of elementary  
6                   school and secondary school students in the ge-  
7                   ography and cultures of other countries where  
8                   the volunteers have served;

9                   (B) projects that involve partnerships with  
10                  local libraries to enhance community knowledge  
11                  about other peoples and countries; and

12                  (C) audiovisual projects that utilize mate-  
13                  rials collected by the volunteers during their  
14                  service that would be of educational value to  
15                  communities.

16           (3) ELIGIBILITY.—

17                   (A) RETURNED PEACE CORPS VOLUN-  
18                   TEERS.—To be eligible for a grant under this  
19                   section, an individual who has served as a  
20                   Peace Corps volunteer shall have successfully  
21                   completed all aspects of the volunteer's required  
22                   Peace Corps service.

23                   (B) NONPROFIT CORPORATIONS.—To be  
24                   eligible for a grant under this section, a non-  
25                   profit corporation shall have a board of direc-

1           tors composed of one or more returned Peace  
2           Corps volunteers with a background in commu-  
3           nity service, education, or health.

4           (C) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 60  
5           days after the date of the enactment of this  
6           Act, the Director of the Peace Corps shall pro-  
7           mulgate rules and guidelines as to the appro-  
8           priate accounting and audit standards and  
9           other reporting requirements that must be ad-  
10          hered to by an individual or nonprofit corpora-  
11          tion as a condition of eligibility to receive  
12          grants under this section.

13          (c) STATUS OF THE FUND.—Nothing in this section  
14          shall be construed to make any individual or nonprofit cor-  
15          poration supported under this section an agency or estab-  
16          lishment of the Federal Government or to make any mem-  
17          ber of the board of directors or any officer or employee  
18          of such nonprofit corporation an officer or employee of the  
19          United States.

20          (d) CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT.—Grant recipients  
21          under this section shall be subject to the appropriate over-  
22          sight procedures of Congress.

23          (e) FUNDING.—

24                (1) IN GENERAL.—In addition to any other  
25          funds made available to the Peace Corps under any

1 other provision of law, there is authorized to be ap-  
2 propriated for the Peace Corps for fiscal year 2008  
3 and each fiscal year thereafter \$10,000,000 to carry  
4 out this section.

5 (2) AVAILABILITY.—Amounts appropriated pur-  
6 suant to paragraph (1) are authorized to remain  
7 available until expended without regard to fiscal  
8 year.

9 **SEC. 104. RECRUITMENT OF EXPERIENCED VOLUNTEERS.**

10 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-  
11 ings:

12 (1) The vast majority of Peace Corps volunteers  
13 have recently graduated from college.

14 (2) The Peace Corps should include among its  
15 ranks more experienced individuals as Peace Corps  
16 volunteers to help meet specific development needs  
17 in certain countries and to serve as mentors for less  
18 experienced volunteers.

19 (b) RECRUITMENT GOAL.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Peace  
21 Corps shall set a goal of doubling by December 31,  
22 2009, the number of Peace Corps volunteers with at  
23 least 5 years of relevant work experience serving in  
24 the Peace Corps and shall implement measures to  
25 achieve such goal.

1           (2) REPORTS.—The Director shall periodically  
2       report to Congress the progress made in achieving  
3       the recruitment goal established pursuant to para-  
4       graph (1).

5       (c) SURVEY OF EXPERIENCED VOLUNTEERS.—The  
6       Director of the Peace Corps shall conduct, every 2 years,  
7       a survey of Peace Corps volunteers with substantial work  
8       experience who are serving in country to determine what  
9       additional actions would reduce or eliminate disincentives  
10      and barriers to service for Peace Corps volunteers with  
11      substantial work experience.

12      (d) PLAN FOR ELIMINATING DISINCENTIVES.—The  
13      Director of the Peace Corps shall direct a study on the  
14      disincentives and barriers to service for Peace Corps vol-  
15      unteers with substantial work experience and shall estab-  
16      lish and report to Congress on a plan for eliminating such  
17      disincentives and barriers. The plan shall include the de-  
18      velopment and use of substantial written language cur-  
19      riculum materials designed to facilitate the learning of for-  
20      eign languages by Peace Corps volunteers with varying de-  
21      grees of work experience and academic training.

22      (e) DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM.—The Director of  
23      the Peace Corps shall designate for each of fiscal years  
24      2008, 2009, and 2010 at least 20 sector-specific programs  
25      in at least 20 different countries for which a minimum

1 of 5 years of relevant work experience shall be required  
 2 of Peace Corps volunteers. The Director shall evaluate the  
 3 issues that arise with respect to those programs as they  
 4 are implemented and conducted.

5 **SEC. 105. DIGITAL PEACE CORPS.**

6 The Director of the Peace Corps shall establish a sys-  
 7 tem for promoting, by electronic means, improved commu-  
 8 nication among Peace Corps volunteers and staff, includ-  
 9 ing the establishment of websites and e-mail links for use  
 10 on a password-only basis by Peace Corps volunteers in  
 11 country to discuss development strategies, funding  
 12 sources, and other issues. All close of service reports shall  
 13 be available on such websites or e-mail links.

14 **TITLE II—EMPOWERMENT OF**  
 15 **PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS**

16 **SEC. 201. PARTICIPATION OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS**

17 **IN REVIEWS OF SENIOR STAFF AND PRO-**  
 18 **GRAMS.**

19 (a) REVIEWS OF SENIOR STAFF.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Peace  
 21 Corps shall establish a mechanism for soliciting the  
 22 views of Peace Corps volunteers serving in country  
 23 regarding the support provided by senior staff. The  
 24 information shall be kept confidential and reported  
 25 to the appropriate Regional Peace Corps Directors.

1           (2) CONSIDERATION OF REVIEWS IN CONNEC-  
 2           TION WITH CONTRACT DECISIONS.—The information  
 3           collected pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be given  
 4           appropriate weight in the decisionmaking process  
 5           with respect to the extension of contracts for Coun-  
 6           try Directors, Chief Administrative Officers, Peace  
 7           Corps Medical Officers, and Associate Peace Corps  
 8           Directors.

9           (b) REVIEWS OF PEACE CORPS PROGRAMS.—

10           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Peace  
 11           Corps shall establish a mechanism for soliciting the  
 12           views of Peace Corps volunteers serving in country  
 13           regarding the design, effectiveness, and continued  
 14           need for the programs in which they serve. The in-  
 15           formation shall be kept confidential and reported to  
 16           the appropriate Regional Peace Corps Directors.

17           (2) CONSIDERATION OF REVIEWS IN CONNEC-  
 18           TION WITH PROGRAM DECISIONS.—The information  
 19           collected pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be given  
 20           appropriate weight in the decisionmaking process  
 21           with respect to the design of, and continued need  
 22           for, Peace Corps programs.

23 **SEC. 202. VOLUNTEER ADVISORY COMMITTEES.**

24           (a) IN GENERAL.—There shall be established in each  
 25           country in which Peace Corps programs exist a Volunteer

1 Advisory Committee composed of representatives elected  
2 from among the volunteers serving in such country.

3 (b) DUTIES.—Each Volunteer Advisory Committee  
4 shall meet at least quarterly to make recommendations to  
5 the Country Director, Chief Administrative Officer, Asso-  
6 ciate Peace Corps Directors, and Peace Corps Medical Of-  
7 ficers serving in that country. The recommendations shall  
8 be forwarded to the Regional Peace Corps Director.

9 (c) RESPONSIVENESS TO RECOMMENDATIONS A FAC-  
10 TOR IN PERFORMANCE REVIEWS.—The responsiveness of  
11 the senior staff described in subsection (b) to Volunteer  
12 Advisory Committee recommendations shall be given ap-  
13 propriate weight in the decisionmaking process with re-  
14 spect to performance reviews and extensions of contracts.

15 **SEC. 203. INPUT OF VOLUNTEERS REGARDING SITE SELEC-**  
16 **TION AND TRAINING CURRICULUM.**

17 Associate Peace Corps Directors shall give substan-  
18 tial weight to the recommendations of Peace Corps volun-  
19 teers regarding—

20 (1) Peace Corps site selection, including the  
21 placement of additional or subsequent Peace Corps  
22 volunteers at existing sites; and

23 (2) the training curriculum for Peace Corps vol-  
24 unteers.

1     **TITLE III—PERSONNEL ISSUES**  
2                     **AND BENEFITS**

3     **SEC. 301. REFORMS TO MEDICAL SCREENING PROCESS.**

4             As part of the effort to recruit more experienced  
5 Peace Corps volunteers, the director of the Peace Corps  
6 shall reform the medical screening process used by the  
7 Peace Corps. The reforms shall include the following  
8 measures:

9                     (1) Publication on the Internet website of the  
10             Peace Corps the Medical Screening Guidelines used  
11             by the Peace Corps, including a listing of—

12                             (A) medical conditions that typically dis-  
13                             qualify individuals from serving as Peace Corps  
14                             volunteers; and

15                             (B) medical conditions that typically lead  
16                             to a medical accommodation and a listing of  
17                             countries available to accept volunteers with  
18                             such medical accommodations.

19                     (2) Establishment of a process for applicants  
20             and other interested parties to propose changes to  
21             the Medical Screening Guidelines.

22                     (3) Establishment of a process allowing volun-  
23             teers to appeal rejections on medical grounds, in-  
24             cluding the right to base an appeal on the inad-  
25             equacy of the Medical Screening Guidelines.

1           (4) Publication on the Internet website of the  
2           Peace Corps of a detailed description of the medical  
3           screening process applicable to Peace Corps volun-  
4           teers, including definitions of all applicable terms of  
5           art.

6           (5) Improved information for Peace Corps vol-  
7           unteers and applicants regarding the meaning and  
8           implications of failure to disclose medical informa-  
9           tion.

10          (6) Full reimbursement for medical tests re-  
11          quired by the Peace Corps of volunteers and appli-  
12          cants.

13 **SEC. 302. HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR RETIREES**  
14 **WHO SERVE AS PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS.**

15          (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-  
16          ings:

17               (1) Peace Corps volunteers, who receive health  
18               care benefits from the Peace Corps during their  
19               service, have the right, pursuant to regulations pro-  
20               mulgated by the Office of Personnel Management  
21               (subpart C of part 890 of title 5, Code of Federal  
22               Regulations), to suspend Federal health benefits cov-  
23               erage during their terms of service, when they re-  
24               ceive benefits provided by the Peace Corps, and re-  
25               sume enrollment when their service is complete.



1 **SEC. 304. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON NEED FOR SPECIAL**  
2 **RULE FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS AND**  
3 **EMPLOYEES IN DETERMINING EXCLUSION OF**  
4 **GAIN FROM SALE OF PRINCIPAL RESIDENCE.**

5 It is the sense of Congress that the Department of  
6 the Treasury should propose and Congress should enact  
7 legislation to provide tax treatment related to gain from  
8 sales of principal residence by Peace Corps volunteers dur-  
9 ing their period of active service that is similar to the  
10 treatment given members of the uniformed services and  
11 the foreign service.

12 **SEC. 305. TREASURY GUIDANCE REGARDING TAX DEDUC-**  
13 **TIONS.**

14 The Secretary of the Treasury shall, in consultation  
15 with the Director of the Peace Corps, publish guidance  
16 with respect to expenses which may be deducted from  
17 gross income that are pertinent to individuals enrolled as  
18 volunteers or volunteer leaders under the Peace Corps Act  
19 (22 U.S.C. 2501 et seq.).

20 **SEC. 306. PROTECTING RIGHTS OF PEACE CORPS VOLUN-**  
21 **TEERS.**

22 (a) CONDUCT SUBJECT TO TERMINATION.—The Di-  
23 rector of the Peace Corps shall ensure that Peace Corps  
24 volunteers are subject to administrative separation only  
25 for specific conduct violations specified in section 204 of

1 the Peace Corps Manual and that volunteers are made  
2 fully aware of the consequences of such violations.

3 (b) WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION.—The Director  
4 of the Peace Corps shall ensure that Peace Corps volun-  
5 teers reporting the misconduct of Peace Corps staff or ad-  
6 vocating for reforms are treated in accordance with the  
7 provisions of chapter 23 of title 5, United States Code,  
8 prohibiting certain personnel practices (commonly referred  
9 to as whistleblower protection provisions).

10 (c) RIGHT TO PUBLISH WITHOUT PRIOR AP-  
11 PROVAL.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-  
13 graph (2), Peace Corps volunteers shall not be re-  
14 quired to submit stories, articles, or other material  
15 they publish to Country Directors for prior approval.

16 (2) EXCEPTION RELATED TO COUNTRY-SPE-  
17 CIFIC MATERIAL.—

18 (A) APPROVAL REQUIREMENT.—A Peace  
19 Corps volunteer shall be required to submit to  
20 a Country Director for review and prior ap-  
21 proval any stories, articles, or other material  
22 that the volunteer intends to publish that relate  
23 specifically to the Peace Corps program oper-  
24 ating in the country where the volunteer is serv-

1           ing or to policies or actions by officials of the  
2           government of such country.

3                   (B) RIGHT TO APPEAL.—The decision of a  
4           Country Director regarding material submitted  
5           for approval under subparagraph (A) shall be  
6           appealable to the Regional Peace Corps Direc-  
7           tor.

8   **SEC. 307. FINANCIAL GUIDE FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUN-**  
9                   **TEERS AND APPLICANTS.**

10          The Peace Corps shall publish a financial guide for  
11   Peace Corps volunteers and applicants regarding how to  
12   manage finances in the United States while serving  
13   abroad.

14   **TITLE IV—AUTHORIZATION OF**  
15                   **APPROPRIATIONS**

16   **SEC. 401. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

17          Section 3(b)(1) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C.  
18   2502(b)(1)) is amended to read as follows:

19          “(1) There are authorized to be appropriated to carry  
20   out the purposes of this Act \$336,000,000 for fiscal year  
21   2008, \$380,000,000 for fiscal year 2009, \$450,000,000  
22   for fiscal year 2010, and \$618,000,000 for fiscal year  
23   2011.”.

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