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House of Representatives

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD

A TRIBUTE RECOGNIZING THE 47TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PEACE CORPS

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and commend the 190,000 former and current volunteers of the United States Peace Corps, as we celebrate the 47th Anniversary of this extraordinary agency.

In a 1960 speech to students at the University of Michigan, President Kennedy issued one of his most historic challenges. He asked Americans to trade the comforts of home for the adversities of volunteer work overseas and, in doing so, serve our country by serving the rest of the world.

President Kennedy's original mission for the Peace Corps remains unchanged today. The Peace Corps volunteers – who range from college graduates to retirees with decades of experience – help the people of host countries by sending trained men and women with expertise in a variety of professional fields. The volunteers also promote a better understanding of Americans abroad and create bonds of friendship that last a lifetime.

More than 8,000 Peace Corps volunteers currently serve in 74 countries. In some of the most deeply impoverished regions of the world, the volunteers are often the first glimpse of America that the people have ever encountered. These volunteers make significant and lasting contributions in each host country through their work in agriculture, business development, information technology, education, youth, environment, health and HIV/AIDS.

Through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, PEPFAR, Peace Corps volunteers continue to meet the challenges of the HIV/AIDS pandemic working both formally and informally in 10 of the 15 focus countries.

In 2007, approximately 93 percent of all Peace Corps posts contributed to HIV/AIDS activities. These volunteers assisted more than 1 million people.

I am especially proud of the seven volunteers from the 34th District currently in service with the Peace Corps. These remarkable men and women from my Los Angeles district and the countries they are currently serving in are as follows: Jennifer Baez, Ecuador; Roberto Dubon, Paraguay; Anna Frumes, Ukraine; Joyce Hahn, Azerbaijan; Roanel Herrera, Panama; and Christina and Justin Senter, Mauritania in North-West Africa. I congratulate them and all of the 821 Californians currently serving around the globe as Peace Corps volunteers.

I also thank Peace Corps Director Ron Tschetter, himself a former volunteer in India, for his service at the organization's helm since September 2006. Mr. Tschetter is the latest in a long line of distinguished Peace Corps Directors that includes Jack Vaughn, Carol Bellamy and, of course, Sargent Shriver, who served as the organization's first leader under President Kennedy.

Peace Corps volunteers each cross the borders of language and culture to inspire new perspectives, provide real assistance in their host countries, and extend American values and friendship around the world. They are a unique and effective corps of informal ambassadors for this country.

Madam Speaker, as the Peace Corps observes its 47th Anniversary, please join me in congratulating Ron Tschetter and the organization's thousands of volunteers on a job well done. They truly represent the best of what our great nation has to offer.