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WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR SENATE RULES COMMITTEE  
RE: SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 3  
Recognizing the contributions and sacrifices of Peace Corps Volunteers

February 12, 2015

I first want to thank Sen. Denbrow and others for their initiative in bringing SCR-3 to the Oregon Senate floor recognizing the contributions and sacrifices of Peace Corps Volunteers serving worldwide today and in the past 54 years.

My name is Gordon Young, and I live in Carver, Oregon. I was born and raised in Montavilla, Portland, Oregon. I graduated from PSU, sold my belongings with my family's blessing, paid off my student loans; and was given an assignment to serve. In Malaysia? Where?

Today, as always since 1961, Peace Corps sends the best and brightest Americans abroad on behalf of the United States to tackle the most pressing needs of people around the world. Volunteers work at the grassroots level to develop sustainable solutions that address challenges in education, health, economic development, agriculture, environment and youth development. Through service, volunteers gain a unique cultural understanding and a life-long commitment to service that positions them to succeed in today's global economy. Since President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps in 1961, nearly 220,000 Americans of all ages have served in 140 countries worldwide. Where Oregon sits per capita with currently serving volunteers is #7 in the country. Eugene is #10 in the country for top metro areas.

Today, Malaysia is my second HOME. I was fortunate then in that my assignment was not "patchy" due to communication barriers between governments. Many PCVs arrive on assignment and job description doesn't apply and volunteer initiative, creativity and resourcefulness becomes their mantra to win the day. I had completed a BS in Management with background in running a family manufacturing business and working the fields in agriculture for a local seed company while studying. I was assigned to train State run agriculture cooperatives in rural, Kuala Brang, Trengganu, West Malaysia, focusing on sustainable business practices and marketing techniques. Did I say rural? Then, it took four hours by taxi (MBenz with air) or bus, over pothole surfaces, to reach the State capital, Kuala Trengganu and the luxury of English conversation. No McDonalds, Starbucks, or potable fresh water. I walked 2.5 miles to work each morning, learning the benefits of selamat

pagi (“good morning”), in uplifting both those greeted and me. Surprisingly it became ritual and an expectation by many. Years later, upon visiting with friends and obviously with changes in their lifestyles, that “ritual expectation”, was warmly expressed as remembered and longed for again.

Malaysia is a Peace Corps success story. It has grown from a rural agriculture economy to a growing middle class manufacturing “tiger”. That road to Kuala Trengganu today takes 20 minutes. The preferred transportation mode has changed from maybe a bicycle or motorbike to personal autos or two in the garage. Peace Corps finished in Malaysia in 1978 due to econometrics fit and Peace Corps Charter.

Recently (2013), a Malaysian Mentri approached Peace Corps in Washington DC, inviting Peace Corps to return to Malaysia to teach English in the rural kompongs. Malaysians were unwilling to serve in “difficult” regions. This was a testimonial to the legacy of the PCV and the three goals of the Peace Corps:

1. Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.

Through interviews with historians, volunteers, government officials (national and international) you get a closer look at the sometimes patchy, often difficult, but always inspiring development efforts of Peace Corps projects through the ages. We learn how idealism and pragmatism influenced the formation of the agency, and how changes in the political climate, changes in Peace Corps leadership, changes in the understanding of development, and changes in Peace Corps demographics have affected the efforts towards this goal. We consider what kind of “trained men and women” are needed going into the future.

2. Helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.

Today, Peace Corps is better understood in many nations outside of the US than it is at home. Host country nationals interviewed from little villages to large cities to government agencies give a better understanding of the impact volunteers have in the cross-cultural exchange taking place over the two years of a Peace Corps assignment, and the many years the Peace Corps may be present in a country. Sitting heads of state and former presidents credit their interactions with Peace Corps as the impetus for their lives and careers. Some countries are modeling their own volunteer service after the Peace Corps, and groups organized by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers continue to serve their host countries.

3. Helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans here at home.

There is this ripple effect that turns a 2-year Peace Corps assignment into a lifelong commitment. “Bringing it home,” not only the volunteers themselves have changed, but also how their communities are affected from the individual family level to national and international efforts to build a peaceful world. When the Peace Corps is viewed as an isolated 2-year international experience of an individual, it is more easily dismissed, than if the continuing legacy of an ever growing body of returned volunteers is included in the equation. © 2013 In the Cause of Peace LLC

Today, I work and volunteer in my community. My work is for a Singapore owned freight forwarding company with an ethnic diversity of employees that understands selamat pagi. My family is bilingual and I am an appointed Trustee for Clackamas County Vector Control District, an at-large member of CC Economic Development Commission, Treasurer of the Skating Club of Oregon and Networking Coordinator for Columbia River Peace Corps Association. Volunteering is my main engine.

So how many times has Peace Corps service been mentioned, and someone says..."oh, Peace Corps? Is it still around?" It has happened to me a surprising number of times, at my workplace, from my friends, from any number of casual and professional contacts. In fairness, this is interlaced with the opposite response: {sigh with longing, reflective look} "I always wanted to do Peace Corps."

I (we), in resolution invite the Peace Corps volunteer community and others, to join us and rally our "engines" around SR3. Peace Corps is the story. It is our legacy. It is our future. Let the dream continue to grow and flourish. Together, we can share the story of the Peace Corps, its achievements and its future.

Yang benar,

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