

Testimony to Senate Committee on Rules, supporting Senate Concurrent Resolution 3

February 11, 2015

Submitted by:

Chuck McConnell; 1200 NW Marshall Street; Suite 706; Portland, OR 97209

Chair Rosenbaum, members of the committee, thanks for this opportunity to speak in support of senate concurrent resolution 3.

I'm a bit of an outsider here in that I don't have the privilege to vote for any of you. It's a near miss with Senator Burdick...less than a mile...but, well, districts are districts.

Background first.

I'm a returned Peace Corps volunteer. I served as an "older volunteer" in Ukraine, 2008 – 2010. Peace Corps recycles used volunteers, and I had the privilege to return to Ukraine with Peace Corps in 2011. I'm a member of Columbia River Peace Corps Association, the returned volunteer group whose members live – more or less – within 30 miles of the Columbia River, west of Hood River. And I am a member of the board of directors of National Peace Corps Association, the national organization that binds together the various local returned volunteer groups across the country.

I care about Peace Corps. And Peace Corps volunteers...prospective, serving, or returned.

So, I'm here to encourage the 78th Oregon legislature to recognize Peace Corps volunteers.

The proposed concurrent resolution includes a lot of numbers. They're all right and impressive, and you have staff to research them. But I think this is more important...

And, Senator Boquist – I think you have insight on this that the rest of us may not.

The world is a complicated...dangerous, turbulent...place. And there are values...American values of civil society...that we, as a nation, wish to project into that world because we believe they will make the world less dangerous, more stable.

Years ago, in the 1980s, I lived in Alaska. Back then, there was a popular bumper sticker up there that said, "Alaska is what America was."

I'm a new Oregonian. I've only lived here a little over four years. I came here right after Peace Corps, in fact.

And I've often reflected on that Alaska bumper sticker, and thought that – here – it should say, "Oregon is what America will be." Or, at least, what we hope it will be.

I think we all know, and even occasionally joke about the fact that, among states – Oregon is an outlier. But I believe that, in many ways, we are more American than much of the rest of America. I've lived in ten states and, because of work, traveled extensively – close to the ground – in all fifty.

Here in Oregon, when we have political differences, we work 'em out. That's what you guys do every day when you're here. And indeed, that's what your staff is doing every day – year 'round.

Because I have a special interest in that area, I can tell you that Oregon is a national leader in the application of mediation....to conflicts from small claims court, to mortgage foreclosures and medical malpractice, and all the way up to enormous environmental questions.

We work things out. That's an American value....which we fully realize in Oregon.

Any returned Peace Corps volunteer will tell you...digging wells, teaching English, helping in medical clinics...is only a tiny part of what Peace Corps volunteers do.

The main thing Peace Corps volunteers do is carry American values.

And I posit to you today that those are actually Oregon values. American values, certainly, but most fully realized now in Oregon. Those values....the essential values of civil society...are the values that Peace Corps volunteers take to the world.

And that is the reason you should recognize their work. Peace Corps volunteers project not just America...generally, but Oregon...specifically.

Thank you.