

Title:

Honoring the 65th Anniversary of the Peace Corps

Hon.& Member's Official Name:

Hon. Ed Case

Full Name of Congressional State:

Hawaii

Current Date:

Monday, May 04, 2026

Member's Name as it Appears in Official Record:

Mr. Case

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I rise today to express my steadfast support for the Peace Corps as we celebrate the 65th anniversary of its founding this month.

On March 1st, we marked 65 years since President John F. Kennedy issued his historic call to service at the University of Michigan. That call inspired a generation of Americans to serve beyond our shores. From its first group of volunteers in 1961, the Peace Corps has grown into a global network of more than 240,000 Americans who have served in over 140 countries. For six and a half decades, it has remained a singular instrument of American people-to-people diplomacy, advancing world peace and friendship through service.

Today, the Peace Corps continues to connect American volunteers to opportunity internationally, providing technical assistance and fostering social and economic development abroad. Its services span various fields, including agriculture, economic development, education, environment, health and youth development.

As a Member of Congress from Hawai'i, representing our Pacific Island communities and the deep ties that bind us across Oceania, I am especially proud of the Peace Corps' enduring legacy in the Indo-Pacific. The Peace Corps first established its presence in the Pacific Islands in 1966. It partnered with what are now the Freely Associated States - the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Since then, more than 13,000 volunteers have served in 12 Pacific Island nations. They have taught in classrooms, strengthened public health systems, supported youth leadership and worked alongside communities to build climate resilience and promote sustainable development.

Service flourished in the region until 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the evacuation of thousands of volunteers. This marked the first global suspension of Peace Corps operations in its history. But today, we celebrate not only an anniversary, but a new beginning.

Peace Corps volunteers have returned to Samoa, Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu. Plans are underway to resume service in Palau, and Congressional support exists to expand to the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia. In January 2023, Samoa became the first Pacific Island nation to welcome volunteers back after the pandemic. Americans are once again serving as educators, librarians, health partners and community development advisors. They are working on disaster preparedness, environmental education and youth empowerment.

Public support for the Peace Corps remains strong. The ratio of annual applications to available volunteer positions exceeds 4 to 1. Thousands of Americans are ready and eager to serve. Retired General Stanley McChrystal described the gap between applicants and available opportunities as "democratic energy wasted and a generation of patriotism needlessly squandered." With sufficient funding, the agency can expand into strategically important regions, including additional Pacific Island nations that are eager to welcome volunteers.

Today, I continue to see the impact of the Peace Corps in my own district. I see it in the enthusiastic students at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa who are preparing to become the next generation of Peace

Corps volunteers. I also see it in the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Hawai‘i, more than 300 members strong, including many elders (kupuna) and veterans, who after completing their service chose to carry forward the Peace Corps mission here at home and across our nation.

At a time when the world faces complex geopolitical, economic, humanitarian, public health and climate challenges, this is not the moment to reduce our commitment. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I strongly support the Peace Corps and its mission. I will continue working to protect and strengthen its funding so it can meet the growing demand for service.

On this 65th anniversary, let us reflect on President Kennedy’s vision. He recognized that the talents cultivated across our nation could serve the common good. He understood that national security and compassionate diplomacy are linked. That vision lives on through the work of thousands of volunteers today. It is our responsibility to carry that legacy forward.

To our Peace Corps family (‘ohana) around the world, past, present and future, please know that your steadfast commitment to service is deeply appreciated and profoundly valued. Especially in challenging times, your dedication to a broader purpose reflects the very best of our nation.

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Ed Case