

Every day, the world is becoming more globalized and I'm very active in a wide range of foreign affairs issues, from Latin America to the Middle East and everywhere in between. Having served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Colombia, I believe that lasting peace should be the endgame for all our foreign policy undertakings. I have always used my voice and my vote to promote American engagement around the world that furthers human rights, equality of opportunity, and prosperity.

Peace Corps

In the 1960s, I spent two of the most formative years of my life working as a Peace Corps Volunteer in a poor barrio in Medellin, Colombia. I saw first-hand how dehumanizing poverty is, and how it strips families of hope and opportunity. Without a doubt, that experience of service helped shape who I am today, and I have taken every opportunity to both support and strengthen the Peace Corps.

In honor of Peace Corps 50th Anniversary in 2011, I sent President Obama a letter signed by 137 bipartisan Members of Congress, urging him to recognize this milestone. I am very pleased that on March 1st, 2011, President Obama issued a [Presidential Proclamation](#) honoring the 50th Anniversary of the Peace Corps and stating that “the mission of the Peace Corps is more relevant today than ever.”

I could not agree more. Dollar for dollar, the Peace Corps is one of the most effective diplomatic tools at our disposal. Over the past 50 years, more than 200,000 Americans have shown the world a hopeful, uplifting side of the United States that reflects our fundamental ideals of service, tolerance, and grassroots development. Now more than ever, as the US confronts harsh scrutiny from the international community, we must support this program that has become a beacon of American idealism and goodwill.

Peace Corps' 50th Anniversary was also an important time to evaluate not only the assets of the program, but what must be strengthened. Congressional Hearings last year highlighted the need for increased safety and security measures for female Volunteers. I was proud to support the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011 to help ensure that every Volunteer has the resources and support necessary to safely serve their country in the name of peace. President Obama signed this bill into law in November 2011.

Iraq and Afghanistan

I have consistently opposed the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and my opposition remains unwavering. From day one, I was skeptical about what our military could accomplish in either country.

As you may know, on December 15, 2011, the Iraq war officially ended. I applaud President Obama for maintaining his campaign commitment to end the Iraq war. We have lost nearly 4,500 American soldiers, and we will be forever indebted to these brave women and men who died in defense of our country. The cost of those lives can't be measured.

But the war in Afghanistan rages on. I have repeatedly voted to fix our failed policies by eliminating all funds for war except those used for troop security and withdrawal.

Make no mistake about it: I firmly support our men and women in uniform. For this reason, we

must bring them home from a battlefield with no real hope of military victory. I have repeatedly voted to fix our failed policies by eliminating all funds for war except those used for troop safety and withdrawal.

As Washington looks to restore fiscal order, we cannot afford to put another dollar towards a war that doesn't have a military solution. We spend \$6.7 billion every month on the war in Afghanistan. That's \$216 million a day. By the time you're done reading this, we will have spent another \$150,000 on America's longest war in history. This makes absolutely no sense.

Without question, our military is the most powerful in the world. But it has become crystal clear that military might alone cannot sustain peace. Political and military leaders agree on this, but we need to turn that agreement into action. Until we can sustain peace, our military's prowess alone will never be sufficient.

But above all, we absolutely cannot afford to lose another life to this war. The time for peace is now. We cannot wait another minute.

Arab-Israeli Conflict

I believe peace is possible in the Middle East, but that peace demands political courage, dedication, and sustained diplomacy. The status quo has devastating consequences for Israelis, Palestinians, and the entire region. The debate about Israel and Palestine should not be about righteousness, historical precedence or volume of grievances. Rather, we must have a laser-sharp focus on real solutions, what can be done here and now to curb violence and broker a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Time and time again, I have pushed for security for Israel, prosperity for Palestine and long-term peace for the whole region. I recently traveled to the Middle East to see and hear first-hand from a diverse array of perspectives on the issues.. This trip reinforced my basic belief that for the security of the region and the safety of the civilian population, violence cannot be a solution to the conflict. The path to peace must be negotiated, and I will continue to support sustained diplomatic negotiations.

Latin America

I strongly support our regional allies in Latin America and continue to promote economic and social development in the region. Widespread hemispheric poverty is a threat to the justice and basic human dignity that every individual deserves. Through legislation, letters, and trips to the region, I've worked to forge strong regional partnerships that prioritize meaningful investments in poverty alleviation and human rights. I have also launched an on-going monthly Congressional briefing series called Latin America on the Rise that brings in a diverse array of panelists to address emerging and emergent issues in the hemisphere. Click [here](#) to read about the latest briefing.

I have been a long-standing champion for human rights, rule of law, local capacity building, and economic and agricultural development throughout the hemisphere. But I want to highlight my work in two Latin American countries in particular.

Colombia

Colombia is one of our best allies in the hemisphere, and I believe it's essential that we work as equal partners to promote stability, justice, and human rights. I have always encouraged investments in Colombian-led economic development initiatives. Particularly now as Washington looks to cut spending, this kind of smart, front-end assistance will yield long-term savings for the US by building up local capacity and reducing the need for US foreign aid.

One of the biggest challenges facing Colombia is internally displaced people (IDPs). IDPs are individuals who have fled their home due to armed conflict. But, unlike refugees, they remain within their own country's borders. Colombia is home to a staggering 27% of the world's IDPs. An estimated 10% of the Colombian population is displaced, and armed conflict continues to displace some 130,000 people annually. These individuals are especially vulnerable to discrimination and forced recruitment into the armed conflict. This situation not only threatens fundamental human rights, but also further jeopardizes the stability and security of Colombia and the country's prospects for peace.

I have hosted briefings to bring this under-reported issue to the attention of my Congressional colleagues, in addition to fighting for robust funding to address this humanitarian crisis and find durable solutions to internal displacement.

Cuba

I've traveled to Cuba several times since arriving in Congress. Our decades-old isolationist stance has done little to promote human rights or freedom of expression for the Cuban people. A 21st century policy of exchange that enables the free flow of ideas will do more to foster democratic development in our Caribbean neighbor than a policy of isolation. We must promote the transmission of democratic values through our greatest diplomatic assets – our citizens. But our archaic policy makes it easier for a potato to get to Cuba than a person.

I've consistently met with Administration officials to advocate the expansion of acceptable categories of travel, while working tirelessly to build support in Congress to get rid of the travel ban. I am very pleased that the Obama Administration issued new Cuba travel regulations that expand the scope of permissible travel.

This is an important thaw in our diplomatic freeze and a significant shift towards developing 21st century engagement with Cuba. But while these regulations are a good step, they aren't the endgame. I will continue to fight to lift the embargo so that there can finally be a free flow of travel, exchange, and ideas between the US and Cuba.

Bills I Sponsored in the 112th Congress:

- H.R. 854 - To establish a commemorative to honor the founding of the Peace Corps

Bills I Cosponsored in the 112th Congress:

- H.R. 780 - Responsible End to the War in Afghanistan Act of 2011
- H.R. 808 - Department of Peace Act of 2011
- H.R. 949 - Obstetric Fistula Prevention, Hope, and Dignity Restoration Act of 2011
- H.R. 1317 - Stop Wasting Taxpayer Money on Cuba Broadcasting Act of 2011
- H.R. 1319 - Global Sexual and Reproductive Health Act of 2011
- H.R. 1735 - Afghan Exit and Accountability Act of 2011
- H.R. 1886 – Export Freedom to Cuba Act
- H.R. 1887 – Free Trade with Cuba Act
- H.R. 1888 – Promoting American Agricultural and Medical Exports to Cuba Act
- H.R. 2639 – Global Democracy Promotion Act
- H.R. 2705 – Education for All Act
- H.R. 2757 –Iraq Withdrawal Accountability Act
- H.R. 3088 – Cost of War Act

- H.R. 3357 – Child Marriage Violates the Human Rights of Girls Act
- H.R. 3368 – Latin American Military Training Review Act
- H.R. 4173 – Prevent Iran from Acquiring Nuclear Weapons and Stop War Through

Diplomacy Act

- H.R. 5905 – International Violence Against Women Act
- H.R. 6087 – Protecting Girls by Preventing Child Marriage Act
- H.Res. 20 - Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Senate should pass the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- H.Res. 35 - Recognizing the anniversary of the Haitian earthquake and expressing solidarity with the Haitian people
- H.Res. 64 - Honoring the life and work of Robert Sargent Shriver
- H.Res. 88 - Expressing solidarity with the people of Egypt in their democratic aspirations
- H.Res. 100 - Honoring the life of David Kato and all who are victims of violence in Uganda because of their sexual orientation or gender identity
- H.Res. 148 - Supporting the goals of International Women’s Day
- H.Res. 361 – Continuing efforts to provide humanitarian relief to mitigate the effects of drought and avert famine in the Horn of Africa
- H.Res. 583 – Support Efforts to end the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and Joseph Kony’s Reign of Terror
- H.J.Res. 80 – Resolution blocking arms sale to Bahrain