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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 this year, 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, 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 Peace Corps Volunteers have shown the world a hopeful, uplifting side of America that reflects our fundamental ideals of service, tolerance, and grassroots development. Now more than ever, as the United States confronts harsh scrutiny from the international community, we must support this program that has become a beacon of American idealism and goodwill.

I also believe that Peace Corps' 50th Anniversary is an important time to evaluate not only the assets of the program, but also what must be strengthened. Congressional Hearings this spring highlighted the need for increased safety and security measures for female Volunteers. As a

staunch supporter of the Peace Corps, I will do everything in my power to ensure that every Volunteer has the resources and support necessary to safely serve their country in the name of peace.

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. The past ten years have shown that invading and occupying Afghanistan and Iraq has been a monumental foreign policy blunder that has cost thousands of lives, squandered billions of dollars, and done little to improve our national security.

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 shrink the deficit, we need look no further than our war spending. 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.

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 both. In June, I traveled to the Middle East to see and hear first-hand from a diverse array of perspectives on the issues at hand. 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. In particular, I want to highlight my work in two important Latin American countries.

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 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 are individuals who have fled their home due to armed conflict. But, unlike refugees, they remain within their own country's borders. Colombia has between three and five million IDPs, many of whom 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.

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. So, I am very pleased that in January, 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 new 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.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