

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 19, 2026

Mr. Richard Swartz
Acting Director
Peace Corps Headquarters
1275 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20526

Dear Mr. Swartz,

We write to request information about the Peace Corps' ongoing plans to reduce staff and reorganize the agency structure. Recent plans shared by the agency include an ambitious plan to increase the number of volunteers to 8,000 per year by 2030. Yet those goals have been paired with significant staff reductions at Headquarters and overseas posts over the past year, raising serious concerns about whether the Peace Corps can meet its statutory responsibilities and safeguard Volunteers in the field. The agency faces major headwinds, including a reduced U.S. diplomatic presence globally and insufficient investment in the prosperity and development of local communities we serve abroad, despite the post Covid-19 demand from our country partners for volunteers. Before any further workforce reductions or restructuring proceed, Peace Corps Headquarters must conduct a force analysis to demonstrate it has the personnel, expertise, and operational capacity to meet statutory requirements and maintain the safety and security of Peace Corps Volunteers worldwide.

At the start of the Trump Administration, Peace Corps Headquarters contained approximately 953 employees and 1,100 open positions—an agency already strained by understaffing. The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) then accelerated a deliberate hollowing out of the Peace Corps' capacity. After the government-wide "Fork in the Road" deferred resignation offer in early 2025 began thinning ranks, DOGE intensified the pressure and in March 2025, supervisors were urged to compile lists of personnel and programs to cut, turning the Peace Corps into a target for downsizing rather than a mission to be rebuilt.

By May, personnel were pushed again toward the Deferred Resignation Program and threatened with termination if they did not accept. Under that campaign, approximately 250 employees took the offer. The outcome has been stark – since the beginning of the Trump Administration, the Peace Corps has lost roughly 40 percent of its personnel, losses consistent with DOGE's cut-first agenda, leaving the agency with fewer people to carry out its core mission.

In September 2025, the Peace Corps Union received an official notice of intent to involuntarily separate 26 Bargaining Unit Employees and 11 non-Bargaining Unit Employees to reach a stated goal of 575 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff at Headquarters. The Union notice period began on September 23, 2025, but was tolled during the government shutdown which lasted from October 1, 2025, to November 12, 2025. The Union met with Agency leadership once the government reopened and was informed verbally that the Reduction in Force (RIF) notice and negotiation period would move forward immediately. At that time, the Peace Corps Union filed a formal grievance against the agency as the language in the Continuing Resolution that was passed on November 12 prohibited additional RIFs from moving forward. The Peace Corps responded by agreeing to toll negotiations until the end of the Continuing Resolution on January 30, 2026. The

recent statements made by the agency's senior leadership indicating that they are pursuing RIFs has deeply concerned the Peace Corps Union and Congress, especially given the current challenges Peace Corps staff have faced while attempting to uphold the Agency's mission and support Peace Corps Volunteers.

In light of these concerns, we respectfully request thorough answers to the questions below:

1. How is the Peace Corps planning to ensure it can meet its statutory requirements and support the well-being of its Volunteers abroad given the current staff limitations faced by the agency?
2. What concrete steps is the agency taking to ensure federal staff are fully supported to complete the work necessary to fulfill the statutory requirements of the agency?
3. What steps is the agency taking to ensure that if they are successful in increasing the number of applications coming in, that they will be able to review, place and support those applicants as volunteers, to the highest standards?
4. Why is the agency proceeding with a RIF plan rather than waiting for natural attrition and term time-outs to occur given that the original plan submitted by Peace Corps to the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget stated that natural attrition would be sufficient to reduce staff?
5. How does the agency plan to ensure that following statutory requirements are met:
 - a) Recruiting and placing qualified volunteers.
 - b) Providing adequate healthcare and safety for volunteers.
 - c) Ensuring adequate response in the event of sexual assault of volunteers. Especially as it pertains to volunteers being able to work with the Office of Victim Advocacy.
 - d) Supporting the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program for return Peace Corps Volunteers.
 - e) Ensuring volunteers receive adequate training abroad.
 - f) Consistently and accurately report data to Congress.

Prior to implementing any additional workforce reductions or restructuring actions, we request that the agency conduct a comprehensive force analysis and provide concrete evidence and justification for how the current reorganization and RIF plans will improve agency efficiency while ensuring compliance with the aforementioned statutory requirements. Thank you for your attention to this urgent request.

Sincerely,


James R. Walkinshaw
Member of Congress


Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



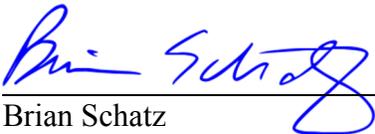
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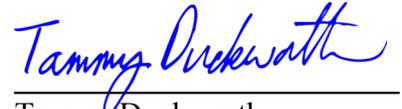
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Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress