

Notes on the National Day of Action and Shriver Leadership Summit - Thomas Potter, NPCA member-elected board member for the Southern Tier;

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The first weekend in March was an exciting time in Washington. It kicked off on Thursday, March 1, with the National Day of Action on Capitol Hill. More than 100 RPCVs and ambassadors from many countries met with House and Senate staffers to advocate for Peace Corps. Our “asks” were flat funding for Peace Corps, \$410 million, an International Affairs Budget of no less than \$60 billion, and passage of bills to improve health care for active and returned PCVs. The meetings were expertly organized by NPCA staff and from everything I heard our message was well received. I also feel honored to have had the opportunity to accompany Susan and David Castle in a meeting with the staffs of Georgia Senators Isakson and Perdue. Susan and David are the parents of Nick Castle, the volunteer who died while in service in China in 2013. As most of you know his death was due to medical negligence on the part of caregivers in his service region. Nick’s parents spoke eloquently about Nick and his commitment to Peace Corps service. I am pleased to say that the senate bill passed on March 14. Other good news is that Peace Corps was leveled funded and that International Foreign Affairs appropriations were close to our 60 billion goal in the recently passed omnibus spending bill. Hard to say if our advocacy influenced the process. Hopefully it did. Whatever the case it felt great to be in a position to advocate for something we all care about.

The Shriver Leadership Summit, which convenes the key stakeholders of our Peace Corps community, kicked off with a reception on Capitol Hill for the participants in the National Day of Action. The summit continued through Friday the 2nd wrapping up at noon on Saturday the 3rd. There was an ambitious agenda and many informative speakers. Adding to the excitement was the weather! This was the weekend of the “bomb cyclone” that brought massive power outages and closed the government.

Glenn Blumhorst, our NPCA CEO, opened the program with his Annual Report to NPCA Stakeholders. His remarks were informative and insightful. Good news is that NPCA’s financial position continues to improve with continuous increase in donations over the past 3 years. He cautioned that here is still much work to be done. Some other areas which he touched on were NPCA’s engagement with affiliate groups in the implementation of Silkstart and filling staff positions. In closing, he highlighted ongoing discussions to move NPCA to new quarters in the NoMA district of Washington. The goal is to purchase a building and convert it for NPCA use and as national center for RPCV activity. Some thoughts that were kicked around in later discussions were inclusion of museum, a hostel, restaurant, and work space for RPCV entrepreneurs. Any ideas? Send them to Glenn.

We later heard from Kathy Stoker, Deputy Peace Corps CEO about transitions in the agency. They are eagerly awaiting arrival of the new Peace Corps Director, Jody Olsen, who was confirmed February 27. Director Olson has a long history with Peace Corps and is an RPCV (Tunisia 1966-68).

Some other program highlights:

Community Fund

Sam Farr on an expanded vision of Peace Corps

Women of Peace Corps Legacy

Peace Corps Museum and Oral History Project

NPCAs partnership with Water Charity. (From what we heard Water Charity has more money that it can spend and is actively looking for partners)

Transition of WorldView magazine.

Last but certainly not least was the opportunity to meet and hear remarks from Senator Harris Wofford during our Friday night dinner. He was witty, insightful, and reinforced the commitment that all of us have to Peace Corps.

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