

Statement for the Record
David E. White, Jr.
Nominee for Peace Corps Deputy Director
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
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10:00 AM

Chairman Merkley, Ranking Member Young, and esteemed Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I want to begin by thanking President Biden for the honor and privilege of being nominated to serve as Deputy Director of the Peace Corps. I also want to thank Director Carol Spahn for her leadership of the agency and her confidence and support throughout this process. I am also deeply grateful to the thousands of Peace Corps Volunteers around the world for their service as well as the dedicated career staff who bring their best each day in support of these Volunteers.

I would not be here without my family. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my parents, David and Kathy White, for their support, as well as to my wife, Dana McKinney White, for her partnership and so much more.

“The Peace Corps represents some, if not all, of the best virtues in this society. It stands for everything that America has ever stood for. It stands for everything we believe in and hope to achieve in the world.”

Those words by Sargent Shriver, the first Director of the Peace Corps, remain as true today as they were then. The Peace Corps’ commitment to public service is one that I’ve long admired and sought to emulate in my own career.

I am a proud third-generation military veteran, so perhaps it’s no surprise that at the age of seventeen, I began my career in public service as a West Point cadet. It was there that I deepened my desire to serve something greater than myself and it’s where I learned the values of “Duty, Honor, Country.”

After graduating from the Academy, I went on to serve as a cavalry officer in the U.S. Army. I had the immense privilege of leading women and men in combat in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Without a doubt, my combat deployment was one of the most formative leadership tests of my career. Each day, I faced new challenges spurred by life in a combat zone—balancing our mission to establish and safeguard a fragile peace with the safety and wellbeing of my soldiers.

My service in Afghanistan cemented my belief that, despite our differences—be they language, culture, or beliefs—all people yearn for the same basic freedoms: safety and security, economic opportunity, an education for their children, and the right to exercise their faith free from persecution.

Of course, this recognition of our common principles is not unique to my service in Afghanistan. As Peace Corps Volunteers know first-hand, effective service requires a commitment to move past our differences and reach common ground to achieve a lasting impact. This expanded worldview and greater mutual understanding benefits not only individual Volunteers and their host communities—it benefits all Americans.

Over the last 62 years, nearly a quarter of a million Volunteers have partnered with local communities on development projects that have substantially improved countless lives. Their work is evidence of the great importance of pursuing peace and friendship around the world. Whether it be building relationships with remote rural communities or partnering to recover from setbacks caused by COVID-19, the Peace Corps' work is as crucial as ever to meet the challenges of the day and prove the value of American leadership in the world.

If confirmed, I will work tirelessly with Director Spahn and my colleagues to achieve the Peace Corps' strategic goals of strengthening local capacity, sharing America with the world, and bringing the world back home.

In doing so, we have to recognize that there's more that we can and must do. We must do more to reimagine our approach to service so that Volunteers and host communities alike are best matched to make the most lasting impact. We must do more to build a Peace Corps that draws on the rich skills and experiences of its dedicated staff and Volunteers to strive for equity and inclusion throughout our work. And finally, we must do more to enhance the quality of our systems that support Volunteers and deliver consistently on the health, safety, and service commitments we make in each partnership.

In closing, I am deeply grateful for your consideration and support of my nomination. If confirmed, I pledge to lead with integrity, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to the Peace Corps' mission to promote world peace. Let us extend America's hand in friendship to show our partners, both old and new, that we are committed to tackling the world's toughest problems together.

Thank you, and I look forward to any questions that you may have.