

**Statement for the Record**  
**Dr. Josephine (Jody) K. Olsen**  
**Nominee for Peace Corps Director**  
**Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**February 27, 2018**  
**2:30 p.m.**

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Merkley, and other distinguished Members of the Committee; it is an honor and a privilege to appear before you today as the President's nominee to lead the Peace Corps.

I am grateful to President Trump for his trust and confidence.

I am also grateful to all those who helped me prepare for today.

I also want to recognize my daughter, son-in-law, and brother, who are here, and family who are watching live.

I vividly remember standing in a classroom before 40 students at the Lycée de Garçon de Sousse on my first day as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Tunisia. I was 22 years old, nervous, and had no idea what my first words would be. In Arabic, French or English.

I stepped forward, said my name, and asked for theirs. Together, with that day's lesson, my two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer had begun.

I discovered who I was in the face of challenges and circumstances that I had never known. I learned to listen to, respect, and honor people who were different than me. I learned about a way of life in North Africa that was unlike mine in Salt Lake City, Utah.

I learned that regardless of differences, there was so much that connected us.

I also learned what it meant to serve my country – to be part of something far, far greater than myself.

From that day in Tunisia, service has remained a central theme in my life. So too has the Peace Corps.

Since taking my oath as a Volunteer, I have been passionately dedicated to lifting up the mission and goals of the agency.

My Peace Corps journey continued when I became a country director; then regional director; and later, Chief of Staff; Deputy Director; and subsequently, Acting Director.

Each of these vantage points has reaffirmed my deep belief in the power of the Peace Corps to change lives across borders and here at home.

Time and again, I have had the honor of seeing Americans engaging with communities in Togo, Peru, Armenia, and countless other countries. And I have seen the remarkable ways that Returned Peace Corps Volunteers teach, inspire, and strengthen communities back home in the United States.

Becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer ignites a passion for service that illuminates incredible possibility around the world and throughout the United States.

This passion for service glows in Memphis, Tennessee, where Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Jay Sieleman brought back to life the Blues Foundation, which is now the largest and most renowned blues organization in the world.

Jay, who after serving as a legal advisor in the Peace Corps in the Solomon Islands, understood the importance of helping preserve American history and the role communities play.

This is why he both raised funds globally to build the Blues Hall of Fame in Memphis and simultaneously developed initiatives to extend community outreach, provide medical and health support to musicians, and grant educational and scholarship opportunities for the next generation of blues players.

As I speak, this passion glows in the more than 7,000 Volunteers who are currently serving in more than 60 countries.

This passion also glows in the more than 230,000 Returned Peace Corps Volunteers all across the United States.

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers bring home unique language, cultural and diplomatic skills. They return with deep knowledge about the countries where they served, and new perspectives about the ways in which our country engages with the world.

They are true global citizens contributing to our global economy, our country, and the urban and rural communities where they live and work all across the United States.

Today, they are running Fortune 500 companies, leading NASA missions on the International Space Station, helping Alaska Native villages with food security, and teaching our nation's next generation of leaders at schools and universities across our country.

In addition to my Peace Corps service, my work at the University of Maryland, has further prepared me to lead the Peace Corps if confirmed.

I have guided the University's global health education programs.

In the process of working with students and health care professionals across the globe, I have seen the importance of cross-community collaboration and capacity building for sustainable impact.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, many of you have asked about my vision for the Peace Corps within its mission and three goals

**First**, if confirmed, I will ensure that the Peace Corps remains the world's preeminent volunteer agency that offers **ALL** Americans the opportunity to serve their country. Regardless of their age, where they live, or their walk of life.

**Second**, I will conduct a full country portfolio review to both make certain that Peace Corps is sending volunteers to interested countries where they are most needed, where they stand poised to achieve greatest impact, and where they deliver the best return on investment for American taxpayers.

**Third**, I will ensure that the Peace Corps recruit the most resilient Volunteers and that while serving, the agency's top priorities will always remain keeping them safe, healthy, and productive in doing their jobs.

This includes, Senators, continuing to reduce risks for Volunteers and respond effectively and compassionately to those who become victims of crime, including sexual assault.

In those tragic instances, Volunteers can count on the Peace Corps being there for them every step of the way.

I see no higher priority for the Peace Corps than the safety and security of our Volunteers as the agency continues to advance its mission, which has changed countless lives in its 57 years – and, I have no doubt, countless more in the years to come.

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Merkley, and other distinguished Members of the Committee; again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Thank you for your support of the Peace Corps and its incredible Volunteers.

I look forward to your questions.