

was extraordinary, both in the sheer volume of legislation that he sponsored and in the dedication that he displayed to improving the education and health of all Americans. Happy birthday to my friend and colleague, Senator TED KENNEDY. Because of you, so many millions of Americans are much better off.●

NATIONAL PEACE CORPS WEEK

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise to take a few minutes, during National Peace Corps Week, to salute the dedication and accomplishments of the hundreds of thousands of Peace Corps volunteers who have served our Nation and the world since President John F. Kennedy had the wisdom and foresight to establish the Peace Corps in 1961.

I want to recognize in particular the 309 current Peace Corps volunteers from Illinois who are today serving in every corner of the globe, as well as the more than 7,000 Illinoisans who have served since the Peace Corps' inception. These men and women come from big cities and small towns, urban centers and rural farming communities. Some are recent college graduates who fit our most common image of a Peace Corps volunteer, while others are older and bring to this new role a lifetime of skills and experience.

Diverse though their backgrounds might be, all Peace Corps volunteers share a common desire to improve the lives of people less fortunate than themselves, and to do so in a direct, hands-on fashion.

Americans are the most generous people in the world. We give from our wallets and we give of our time, donating both of these in large quantities on behalf of the poor, the hungry, and the disenfranchised. Volunteerism and altruism are among the most fundamental aspects of our national character, and all Americans should be proud of our contributions to meeting the world's development challenges.

Yet there is something different, something unique, about those of our fellow citizens who have chosen the Peace Corps path. They move to the other side of the planet, with few to no amenities, and immerse themselves in completely unfamiliar cultures and languages. That type of commitment changes the lives of the local communities in which the volunteers live and work, to be sure. But it also affects profoundly the volunteers themselves, who sacrifice material comforts and proximity to family and friends in exchange for the knowledge that they are having a positive impact.

Sometimes, a Peace Corps volunteer's sacrifice goes far beyond the mere material. This past December, 25-year-old Blythe Ann O'Sullivan of Bloomington, IL, died while serving in Suriname. Blythe was a graduate of Bradley University in Peoria and was in her second year volunteering as a small business adviser at the time of her death. I join her family, friends,

the Peace Corps community and all the people whose lives Blythe touched, not only in mourning her loss but also in celebrating her memory.

I would also like to honor the many Illinois colleges and universities that turn out Peace Corps volunteers in large numbers. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign ranked 16th in the Nation last year among large colleges and universities in the number of alumni volunteers. Northwestern University ranked 12th among medium-sized schools, and the University of Chicago, I am proud to say, was first in the country among smaller institutions. It is a testament to these universities, their faculties, and most of all their students that so many Illinois alumni choose to join the Peace Corps and serve their country and humanity in this way.

You know, most people hear the words "Peace Corps" and picture young American men and women helping the people of some remote village to dig a latrine or a well, or learn English, or access better health care. And of course, this sort of development work is the principal reason the Peace Corps was founded.

But Peace Corps volunteers also serve an equally important role as goodwill ambassadors. They are often the first Americans their overseas friends and neighbors have ever met, and first impressions count for a lot. Over the past several years, much of the world has questioned U.S. intentions and watched us warily until they've been sure of the real meaning behind our words, the real goals behind our actions. The pure altruism of Peace Corps volunteers, living and working every day with citizens the world over, goes a long way toward reassuring the world that Americans are a good and giving people.

The Peace Corps and its volunteers cannot do this alone. It is important that Congress continue to support the Peace Corps to the greatest possible extent. As a member of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on the State Department and Foreign Operations, I am proud that Chairman LEAHY was able to increase the Peace Corps' budget by \$10 million for fiscal year 2008. And I am certain that together we will be able to continue supporting the Peace Corps to make it even more effective and to honor the dedication and sacrifice of the many thousands of volunteers who have served, are now serving, and will serve in the future.

WHITE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I wish to speak briefly about an important issue in my State that involves one of our country's great natural treasures, the White Mountain National Forest. Encompassing nearly 800,000 acres and drawing more than 6 million visitors each year, the White Mountain Na-

tional Forest is not just a place for skiing, hiking, snowmobiling, or timber harvesting it is a source of pride for New Hampshire. And considering its relatively large footprint in our State, how this special place is managed by the U.S. Forest Service matters a lot.

Fortunately, the Forest Service especially Forest Supervisor Tom Wagner has done a great job in overseeing the White Mountain National Forest. Starting in 1997 when the new forest management plan was being developed, the agency made a concerted effort to reach out to the public, welcomed outside comments, and was sensitive to the sometimes competing views of interested parties. This planning process was not an easy task. Forest management is about addressing multiple uses and priorities, and ultimately it should be about compromise. The White Mountain National Forest has long been utilized for a variety of purposes, and any management plan should carefully strike a balance among them while also protecting the forest for future generations.

To come up with a balanced plan, Supervisor Wagner went out of his way to listen to public input and worked closely with government officials, environmental organizations, businesses, and recreation clubs. I met with him during the planning process and was encouraged by his outreach and evenhanded approach.

After years of hard work, Supervisor Wagner and the Forest Service arrived at a forest management plan that achieved general consensus among the major stakeholders and was well received across New Hampshire. I was pleased to support it when the final plan was released in 2005, including working with Senator SUNUNU on legislation implementing its wilderness recommendations. Signed into law in December 2006, this bill designated nearly 35,000 acres of new wilderness in the White Mountain National Forest and was applauded by environmental groups from across the State. I should also note that even our State's logging industry, represented by the New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association, supported the wilderness measure out of the spirit of compromise. Clearly, it was not in their business interest to support more wilderness designation, but they did it anyway since it was part of a balanced management plan that also included limited timber harvesting.

Unfortunately, this balance is now under attack, years after the plan was finalized and other elements have been implemented. A few environmental groups based outside New Hampshire have filed a lawsuit against two timber harvesting projects that were part of the 2005 Forest Management Plan. Encompassing less than 1,200 acres, the projects already have been subject to environmental review, would be very limited in scope, and would be carried out over existing road systems. By delaying these projects, this lawsuit is