

1961

EXECUTIVE ORDER 10924: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PEACE CORPS

While campaigning for the Presidency in 1960, Senator John F. Kennedy proposed the idea of a Peace Corps—an organization of volunteers to work in the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America—to a group of University of Michigan students at a late-night rally. The idea was not new. Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota had proposed establishing a Peace Corps, and his bill had caught the attention of the Massachusetts senator.

Arriving on the Ann Arbor campus at two o'clock in the morning, Kennedy challenged his audience to devote a part of their lives to living and working in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Within weeks, students organized a petition drive and gathered one thousand signatures in support of the idea. Several hundred others pledged to serve. Enthusiastic letters poured into Democratic Party headquarters, influencing Kennedy's decision to prioritize the establishment of a Peace Corps.

The idea fit well with his vision of a "New Frontier." He sought creative as well as military solutions to the global threat of communism and wanted to improve the image of the United States abroad. Kennedy lost no time in realizing his dream of a Peace Corps. Between his election and inauguration, he asked Sargent Shriver, his brother-in-law, to do a feasibility study. "We received more letters from people offering to work in or to volunteer for the Peace Corps," Shriver recalls, "than for all other existing agencies." Within two months of taking office, Kennedy issued an executive order establishing the Peace Corps and appointed Shriver to head the new agency. In September 1961, with volunteers already in the field, Congress passed legislation establishing the Peace Corps and appropriated funds for its operation.

Since the founding of the Peace Corps, more than 168,000 citizens of all ages and backgrounds have worked in more than 130 countries throughout the world as volunteers in such fields as health, teaching, agriculture, urban planning, skilled trades, forestry, sanitation, and technology.

1. What did Executive Order 10924 create?
 2. What was the purpose of Executive Order 10924?
 3. Who issued Executive Order 10924?
 4. In what year was Executive Order 10924 issued?
 5. What do you think the purpose of this organization was? Why do you believe this to be true?
 6. Would you join this organization? Explain
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