

**Introduction of Gaddi Vasquez
Nominee to become Director of the Peace Corps
House Policy Chairman Christopher Cox
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
4 p.m., Wednesday, November 14, 2001
419 Dirksen Senate Office Building**

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, Sen. Boxer, Rep. Sanchez, Gaddi, Elaine, and Jason.

I'm happy to join my colleagues, Sen. Feinstein, Sen. Boxer, and Rep. Sanchez, in strong support of President George Bush's nomination of Gaddi Vasquez to become Director of the United States Peace Corps.

Mr. Chairman, Gaddi Vasquez is the right person at the right time for the right job.

Today, our nation is at war with an enemy who has said: "Yes, we kill your innocents." Osama bin Laden is even willing to label himself a "terrorist," as he did in a recent interview. He and his followers despise the freedom, the way of life, that America represents. President Bush reminds us that to restore peace, this war must be fought on many fronts. Military victory is necessary, but not sufficient, to defend freedom in America and around the world. It is on the idea front—where the Peace Corps is on the front line—that freedom will ultimately prevail. The leader of the Peace Corps can be a leader of America's public diplomacy for peace and freedom. I can think of no one better to speak on America's behalf than Gaddi Vasquez, one of the most articulate advocates for freedom I have known.

When Congress first authorized the Peace Corps in 1961, it was given a charter "to promote world peace and friendship," and "particularly ... to help promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served." Director-designate Vasquez, who is himself the proud product of an immigrant family, knows that for others to understand America, we will have to better understand them as well. I know from my many years of work and friendship with Gaddi Vasquez that he will ably lead the Peace Corps in its mission of spreading hope, and help, and peace around the world, through better mutual understanding.

Director-designate Vasquez has been a community leader in California from his earliest days. In 1975, at age 19, he became the youngest police officer in the entire history of his city. He went on to work in the County Hall of Administration as an assistant to a County Supervisor. Later, Gov. George Deukmejian appointed him to his administration in Sacramento. And beginning in 1987, at the age of 32, Mr. Vasquez served on the County Board of Supervisors for eight years, governing a population of three million people with a GDP of more than \$110 billion. The County of Orange, whose government Director-Designate Vasquez chaired, has an economy larger than all but 31 nations in the world. It ranks ahead of such nations as Israel, Portugal, and Singapore. Its diverse population is larger than 20 states of the Union, with 40 Senators. Its economy is larger than 25 states, with 50 senators.

In this virtual nation-state, Gaddi Vasquez built new regional parks, helped revolutionize surface transportation, and made major advances in protecting the citizens against crimes of violence, gang crime, and child abuse.

Gaddi Vasquez has been tested under fire—particularly during the Orange County bankruptcy. And he has shown himself to be a man of great character. Well before dawn, on Tuesday, December 6, 1994, lawyers and professional staff for this county of three million people determined that the county government was hours away from default. They dispatched Sheriff's deputies to the homes of our Supervisors to rush them to the Hall of Administration. Sometime before 3 a.m., Gaddi Vasquez was the first to arrive at the seat of government. From that moment forward, he focused himself entirely on addressing the crisis. He sacrificed every political consideration to concentrate exclusively on helping the government recover from what we would later learn was the criminal fraud of the County Treasurer. Within 18 months, the County's bankruptcy was a thing of the past. Its bonds are now among the highest-rated in the nation.

Although the County Treasurer and his underlings were convicted of deliberate fraud and concealment, few saw it coming. I was the Chairman of the campaign to unseat the County Treasurer months earlier, and that campaign's single-minded focus was on the Treasurer's risky investments. But the *Los Angeles Times* endorsed the Treasurer for re-election, saying he'd made money for the County, and called the criticism a "bum rap." The credit rating agencies didn't see it coming; Moody's gave Orange County the highest safety rating in California. Neither the financial markets nor the Securities and Exchange Commission saw it coming; indeed, the SEC had examined the bad investments and interviewed the County Treasurer just eight months before, and given them a clean bill of health. None of Supervisor Vasquez's colleagues anticipated the crisis. One of those colleagues, Supervisor William Steiner, summed up Gaddi's response to the crisis as follows:

He was thrust into a leadership position at a time of unprecedented financial crisis. ... [H]e rose to the occasion, doing what was right for Orange County without regard to his own personal or political interests. He had to serve strong medicine to an unwilling, and sometimes unappreciative, county. He did it with dignity and class.

Instead of wasting time on political concerns, Gaddi set an agenda to get the County back on its feet. He fully accomplished his agenda—a recovery plan, a realistic budget, and the restructuring of county government under a strong chief executive officer.

When Gaddi Vasquez concluded his two terms as Supervisor, the head of the Leadership Program for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund in Orange County said, "Gaddi's departure is a tremendous loss to the Latino community. The doors are going to be closed and we won't have the access we once had." But the Latino community's loss, and Orange County's loss, were short-lived.

Gaddi found new ways to serve: The Latino Children's Fund; Olivecrest (which fights child abuse); the Salvation Army; the Boy Scouts of America; the St. Joseph Hospital Foundation; Public Broadcasting; and even service as a reserve police officer. The breadth of his experience—from education, to health care, to communications, to law enforcement—will serve him well in his broad mission at the Peace Corps, which addresses all of these issues in the nations it serves. His experience as an executive for Southern California Edison will also be invaluable.

Mr. Chairman, what better model than Gaddi Vasquez could America present to the world at the helm of our premiere international outreach program?

- A man who was born to migrant farm workers
- A man who grew up in material poverty, but rose to become a police officer in his community
- A man who served with dignity in his state's capital, and who was instrumental to the success of the governor of the nation's largest state
- A man who became the youngest supervisor ever, of a county larger than half the states in the Union
- A man who can inspire with his words, who is not afraid to meet problems head on, and who is willing to sacrifice for the good of his fellow citizens

Mr. Chairman, it is my privilege and honor to recommend to this Committee that Gaddi Vasquez be confirmed by the full Senate as the next Director of the Peace Corps. Thank you, Mr. Chairman