

# The Case for National Service

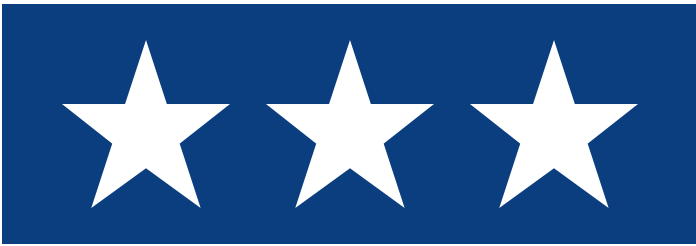
**A Fellowship Research Project for  
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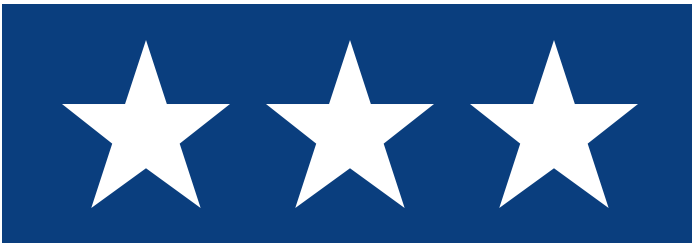




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# Introduction

**By Secretary Leon E. Panetta, Chairman, The Panetta Institute**

Our democracy was founded on the principle of national service. The patriots who stepped forward to fight in our War of Independence and frame a new Constitution believed that all citizens had a duty to protect and sustain their newly established nation. In a letter to James Madison in 1788, George Washington wrote: “The consciousness of having discharged that duty which we owe to our country is superior to all other considerations.”

Today, the duty to keep our country free and strong still rests with every citizen. This responsibility is embraced most obviously by Americans in uniform who are willing to fight and die in our nation’s defense. But duty to country is discharged in other ways as well: by serving in elective office, by teaching our children, by protecting and strengthening our communities, by preserving our natural resources, by providing for the basic needs of our most vulnerable citizens – in short, by serving others.

And because all citizens in a democracy share in this responsibility, it makes sense to offer opportunities for national service to all Americans.

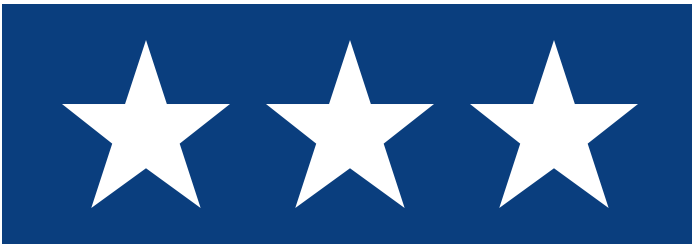
Here at the Panetta Institute, where the promotion of public service is central to our mission, we recently asked a group of our Research Fellows to conduct a national service study, looking at the history of both military and non-military service and at efforts to promote a service ethic. This report is the result of that work.

America is at its best when we pull together to achieve important goals. Voluntary service, not only in the military but in other institutions and programs, can help improve

education, public health, disaster relief, veterans services, natural resources conservation and economic opportunity.

Nearly three thousand mayors and county leaders across the country are on record in support of national service and the positive impact it has on their communities. They recognize that it makes good economic sense. For example, at full capacity, the disaster relief workers in FEMA Corps can save U.S. taxpayers \$60 million a year. Also, participation in national service programs can help young Americans complete their education and relieve their student loan debt. In our most recent national survey, the Panetta Institute found fifty-nine percent of U.S. college students expressing interest in a program in which they would give two years of national service in exchange for help with the cost of college.

Like our nation’s founders, we believe that voluntary service to country is essential to a successful democracy. National service can strengthen our citizens’ love of country and instill in our youth a needed sense of purpose. We hope this report will provide policy makers useful guidance for moving our country in that direction.



# The Benefits of National Service

Uniquely among nations, the United States was founded, not on a shared language or ethnic identity, but on a set of principles – “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Establishing, improving and protecting this fledgling nation required, and continues to require, service and sacrifice.

The founders “understood that such sacrifices and work were necessary to bind the country together, as well as unleash a market of talent and compassion to address social needs.”<sup>1</sup> Service runs through our nation’s history like a vein of precious metal, and in order to face today’s challenges young Americans must tap into that history and connect with their fellow citizens.

Unfortunately, many young Americans reaching out to serve, especially in civilian positions, are denied the opportunity. For example, about half a million individuals apply each year to serve in AmeriCorps and more than eighty-five percent are turned away because there are not enough positions to accommodate them.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the social and environmental problems such programs seek to address continue to proliferate. National service is one of the most potent, cost-effective, broadly supported and currently underutilized tools at our disposal to address these problems. The following challenges are among the most susceptible to the positive impact of broad-based national service.

***Patriotic spirit and sense of purpose are declining among the young.*** Studies show that increasing numbers

of young Americans feel adrift and have trouble finding a sense of purpose.<sup>3</sup> National service can help reverse this by instilling a sense of duty, purpose and patriotism. Whether military or civilian, service is a choice to initiate positive change, improve the self and achieve national progress. Thousands of participants say the experience has been transformative in their lives. In a typical example, AmeriCorps NCCC participant Allie Harris reports, “These experiences and the pleasure I received from making a difference in [students’] lives touched me deeply and I changed. I finally found a purpose in life.”<sup>4</sup>

Youth social action provides a sense of accomplishment, empowers those who participate, and increases participants’ perception of their self-worth. National service participants in a 2014 study rated higher in life satisfaction, had a more positive outlook and reported lower levels of anxiety than those who did not serve.<sup>5</sup> Studies also show that serving once produces a “habit of service” or a sense that serving in the future is one’s duty. Seventy-two percent of AmeriCorps alumni say they have continued to volunteer after completing their service term, and sixty-six percent report going into a public service career.<sup>6</sup> Participants develop a service ethic, are more

likely to consider the struggles and needs of others, and are more likely to serve in the future, a habit that serves them and those around them throughout their lives.<sup>7</sup>

**Young Americans are increasingly disconnected from their communities and the political process.** In the social sciences, “disconnected youth” is a category of teenagers and young adults between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four who are neither working nor in school.<sup>8</sup> A recent study estimated there are “5,527,000 disconnected youth in America today – about as many people as live in Minnesota.”<sup>9</sup> The disconnect is growing in a more general sense as well: fewer Americans volunteer in their communities than in previous decades, and low-income groups suffer an even more dramatic disconnect.<sup>10</sup> Individuals with high levels of income and education are more likely to take part politically, and “as income and education levels increase, so does participation in a wide range of political activities, in particular, working with fellow citizens to solve community problems.”<sup>11</sup>

National service addresses the social disconnect by encouraging civic and political engagement, and by making participation possible for all groups. Civic and political engagement is a key short-term benefit experienced by AmeriCorps participants, and multiple polls and studies indicate this involvement continues for years beyond the end of AmeriCorps service.<sup>12</sup> National service participants who serve in state and local communities report feeling more optimistic about the future of those locations and more likely to continue to work to improve their communities.<sup>13</sup> A 2005 analysis of City Year participants found that forty-one percent voted in their state and local elections compared to thirty-three percent of non-participants, and in 2006, the disparity was fifty-nine percent versus fifty percent<sup>14</sup>. Three years after completing the program, City Year alumni still “scored five points higher than the comparison group on the Political Efficacy Index.”<sup>15</sup>

**Students are struggling to pay for college, and many don't finish because of their debt load.** Rising student debt, increased college costs, and funding cutbacks for higher education have combined to create a “student loan bubble” reminiscent of the pre-2008 housing bubble. “The outstanding balance of the nation’s student loans is growing by an estimated \$2,726.27 every second.”<sup>16</sup> Americans’ \$1.2 trillion in student loan debt poses a serious risk “to the economy as well as to student loan borrowers and their families”; roughly “40 million Americans are carrying some student loans and about seventy percent of students graduate college with debt.”<sup>17</sup> National service programs address this problem



by helping motivated students pay their tuition, pay down debt, and receive education while serving.

In all branches of the United States military, student debt payment programs are offered for qualifying service members, and military enlistment offers a wide range of skills training and educational opportunities. Civilian programs also help students finish school, typically by providing stipends and education awards. For example, AmeriCorps members can qualify for an education award (\$5,775 for full-time service) that can be used toward tuition or to pay back student loans (*AmeriCorps Segal Award 2015*). *Segal AmeriCorps Educational Awards* can be used to help pay for college or “for future endeavors like graduate school, vocational training” or repayment of student loan debt.<sup>18</sup>

**Unemployment continues to undermine the professional potential and quality of life for millions of Americans.** While the United States unemployment rate has been cut in half since the Great Recession of 2008-09, about five percent of the labor force remains out of work and millions of Americans have had to take jobs that pay far less than they were earning years ago. National service programs help address this problem by providing job training and improving employability. For example, ninety percent of AmeriCorps members report gaining useful skills from their experience, and ninety-one percent of AmeriCorps alumni say that since completing their service term they have used the skills they gained.<sup>19</sup>

The service experience makes participants of all educational levels more employable. Unemployed



individuals who volunteer are twenty-seven percent more likely to secure employment than those who do not serve, and unemployed individuals without high school diplomas who volunteer are fifty-one percent more likely to secure employment than those who do not volunteer.<sup>20</sup> After completing a year of AmeriCorps teaching service in high-poverty schools, almost three-quarters of participants reported that they thought the experience would improve their chances of finding a job, and a similar percentage said it would improve their performance at a future job.<sup>21</sup>

**America's rising national debt means we need to save money while meeting critical needs.** The United States debt is more than seventy percent of the Gross Domestic Product, and the debate over funding priorities has become more contentious in the current fiscal and political environment. However, investments in national service produce big returns that save America money. Not only is expanding national service cost-effective, but these benefits continue to grow as participation increases. In addition, the more participation expands, the more efficient programs become.

For every dollar invested in national service there are returns to society of \$3.95 in terms of higher earnings, increased output and other community-wide benefits.<sup>22</sup> For example, at full operational capacity, FEMA Corps is forecasted to save taxpayers \$60 million per year, with total money saved increasing proportional to investment.<sup>23</sup> A recent Columbia University study found that for three AmeriCorps programs, "the total cost, including tax burdens, match-funding and federal funding, was \$1.7 billion annually, while the benefit, including program

outputs and longer-term human and social capital gains, was \$6.5 billion."<sup>24</sup>

National service can also help address our country's major backlog of physical infrastructure investment, which would otherwise be far more expensive. To repair highways and other facilities, many of which were created by New Deal program labor, an investment of at least \$3.6 trillion in the next five years is needed, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers.<sup>25</sup> Service programs have the potential to offset some of this looming cost by providing low-cost labor while also teaching valuable job skills.

**Tensions between Americans of different backgrounds are increasing, while young people have fewer opportunities for shared experiences.** In recent years, there has been a marked increase in cases of racial insult and insensitivity on college campuses. Police use-of-force incidents have sparked outrage in the African American community. Hate crimes against Muslim Americans, Jews and Mexican Americans have all grown in frequency. National service can diminish the growing tensions between diverse groups of Americans by providing opportunities for people of different backgrounds to gain shared experience and expand their perspectives by serving together.<sup>26</sup>

Participants of all races and backgrounds describe how their service has taught them new perspectives and approaches, and exposed them to groups of people with whom they would not have identified in the past. A poll of City Year participants found that "forty-five percent of volunteers felt that volunteering had changed

opinions they previously held of other types of people, and fifty-one percent said that they started to socialize with people who were somehow different [from] them as a result of volunteering.”<sup>27</sup> Another example is the Peace Corps, where members gain international experience, cross-cultural understanding, and fluency in a foreign language while serving abroad. They learn to work with others and consider diverse views, which influences their future decision-making. Johnson & Johnson CEO Alex Gorsky reports that military training taught him the value of working with diverse teams, noting “I quickly discovered no one had a lock on the right answers,” and Michael Morris, former CEO of American Electric Power, says service taught him “a willingness to listen and formulate an opinion that incorporates as many people’s ideas as possible.”<sup>28</sup>

**National leaders increasingly lack a service perspective.** The number of veterans and non-military service alumni in the United States Congress has undergone a long decline. This means a decrease in the unique perspective veterans and service alumni can provide, with fewer leaders having experiences outside their own socio-economic sphere to draw on in an increasingly partisan atmosphere. National service can help address this by providing tomorrow’s leaders a shared experience of service and sacrifice. When young people serve, it affects their entire outlook. “Everything I have done in my career in public office has been grounded in the VISTA experience,” notes former U.S. Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV). For future leaders, national service builds an understanding that “leadership is not about them but about those they serve. It is not about exalting themselves but ... lifting others up.”

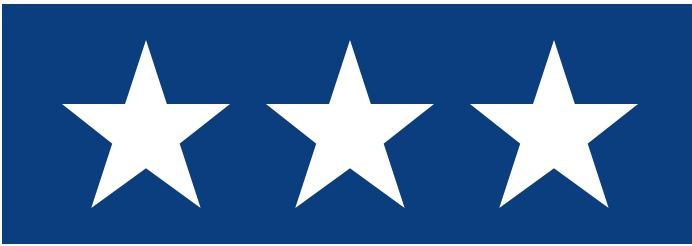
**The United States is underprepared for increasingly severe natural disasters and environmental challenges.** The need for improved disaster readiness and response is growing as our country experiences greater weather extremes such as stronger storms and the lengthy California drought. All the while, FEMA itself is dangerously undermanned. In addition, concern about environmental problems such as pollution, inadequate drinking water and the need for clean energy are rising.

National service efforts like FEMA Corps can help with disaster response by providing additional manpower and critical services in a cost-effective manner. Service programs train youth and the unemployed for conservation and green jobs, reconnect Americans to the outdoors, build an ethic of environmental stewardship, and support successful science-based conservation efforts. Participants in Corporation for National and Community

Service programs train youth and the unemployed for conservation and green jobs, reconnect Americans to the outdoors, build an ethic of environmental stewardship, and support successful science-based conservation efforts.

Service (CNCS) programs provide vital assistance to millions of Americans. National service also addresses environmental concerns by helping to protect state and national parks and other treasured resources. “Increasing energy and water efficiency, increasing renewable energy, and positive behavioral changes ... need the commitment of volunteers to succeed.”<sup>29</sup>

**America faces steep healthcare costs and concerns about healthcare quality.** According to CNCS, “Every day, millions of Americans face health problems that reduce their quality of life. Nearly half of United States adults don’t get needed preventative health services, too many of our nation’s children and youth have unhealthy eating habits and don’t get enough exercise, and many of those over the age of sixty-five need physical assistance to live independently in their homes during their golden years.”<sup>30</sup> National service programs help address these problems by promoting preventive care, providing health education in schools, training health providers, and extending in-home care and other services to individuals who could not otherwise afford them. For example, AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA members provide support for health services through the Community Health Corps, a CNCS program, which “places workers in health centers around the nation to improve access to primary and preventative health care.”<sup>31</sup> Many of these needs are reaching crisis level, and if the number of national service positions is not increased, efforts to address these problems will cost more and take longer.<sup>32</sup>



# Lessons from U.S. History

To determine how best to provide new national service opportunities, we look to past and current service programs that have proved to be successful. “Success” comes down to how effective the program was at accomplishing its policy objective, which requires that we ask the following questions:

- ★ What was the need the program was created to address?
- ★ What were the political conditions and the state of public opinion at the time?
- ★ What was the organizational structure of the program?
- ★ How was the program implemented?
- ★ What was the program’s impact?

While some factors are hard to quantify, answering these questions helps determine the most useful lessons for future national service policy. For example, applying these questions to the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) shows it was a highly successful program. The policy objectives were to put young men (and eventually women) back to work and to use this labor to conserve critical national resources. Because the vast scope of the Depression meant leaders from all regions and political parties saw a need for the progress the CCC could provide in their communities, the program received broad bipartisan support. The CCC was a cooperative effort between major existing federal agencies, which cooperated with states and localities. It resulted in tangible benefits at community, state and federal levels, including 3,470 fire towers erected, 97,000 miles of fire road built, 4,235,000 man-days devoted to fighting fires, and more than three billion trees planted.<sup>33</sup> In short, the CCC clearly accomplished its policy objective: it put young people back to work and conserved vital natural resources.

National service programs also strengthened our fighting forces during World War II, reduced veteran unemployment after the war, provided jobs, helped create and preserve parks and gave students the ability to complete their education during the Great Depression. Such programs have been most effective when our nation has faced a threat perceived to affect all Americans, like the Great Depression or our adversaries in World War II.<sup>34</sup> During times of war, public support or disapproval of the conflict can make or break policy implementation.<sup>35</sup> During times of economic crisis, the most successful programs have utilized partnerships with existing agencies, and incorporating state and local institutions has increased their positive impact. Finally, program implementation benefits greatly when the effort has bipartisan support (as in the case of the CCC), and the perception of success is enhanced when programs address widely recognized problems.



## Strengthening our military in times of conflict

When broad-based national service efforts are employed to bolster and maintain a strong, reliable military force in times of conflict, public perceptions of the conflict and of the draft itself have a definite bearing on policy success.<sup>36</sup> During the Civil War, Union army conscription was aimed disproportionately at recently arrived immigrants, the poor and minorities, and the unfairness of the system led to draft riots and other forms of resistance. Years later, conscription policies during World Wars I and II reversed some of the injustices of the past by being more inclusive of privileged classes, less punitive toward conscientious objectors and more generous to veterans in terms of post-service benefits.<sup>37</sup> The highly unpopular Vietnam War, which again brought widespread draft resistance, led to the establishment of a draft lottery and eventually to an all-volunteer force, and is still cited as evidence of the negative effect unpopular wars can have on service member recruitment, military cohesion and the willingness of the public to share in the sacrifice. Taken together, these examples show that dissatisfaction with the draft has been rooted in its sometimes unfair application and in the unpopularity of some of the wars it has been employed to support. Today, our all-volunteer military forces are remarkably effective in recruiting qualified and highly motivated men and women in numbers sufficient to meet current threats.

## The Selective Training and Service Act

*The Selective Training and Service Act of 1940* accomplished its objective of increasing troop numbers and balancing the manpower demands of industry with those of the military.<sup>38</sup> Prior to the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans were concerned about Germany's growing aggression but reluctant to get involved in another armed conflict overseas. Public opinion began to turn in May 1940, however, with Germany's invasion of France and the Low Countries, which were completely overrun and subdued in just six weeks. Senators Edward Burke and James Wadsworth, Jr. introduced the *Selective Training and Service Act*, which emphasized readiness and reduced or eliminated many of the past discriminatory conscription practices. Passed in September of that year, it established the first peacetime draft in United States history, and it meant that a system for broad-based conscription was already in place when imperial Japan launched its surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, convincing Americans overwhelmingly that the nation's entry into the war had become a necessity.<sup>39</sup>



In contrast, the Draft Board Quota System, the Draft Lottery and other policies used to fill United States military ranks for the war in Vietnam did not sufficiently take into account the political conditions and public concerns at the time. Concerns that led to dissatisfaction with the draft in previous conflicts, such as an unpredictably changing system of deferments, were exacerbated by the policy, and achieving a balance between war-supporting industry at home and military force abroad was not a major priority. Eventually, public resentment of these policies and their implementation, along with growing outrage at the brutality and perceived injustice of the war itself, could not be ignored, and this led at last to the all-volunteer force of today.

## Helping returning veterans

Following the compulsory military service of World War II, the federal government enacted the so-called *GI Bill of Rights*. In exchange for each month spent in the military, veterans were entitled to two months of higher or vocational education in their choice of private or public institutions. Policymakers at the time had fresh memories of the widespread unemployment of the Great Depression, and to avoid a repetition they made the greatest investment in human capital in this country to date. Eight million veterans enrolled in colleges and universities, which led to higher incomes, more taxes paid, and a major return on investment for the United States Treasury. The program prevented the kind of widespread unemployment among veterans that was seen after World War I, and probably more than any other initiative in our history, it helped build a strong middle class in the United States.

## The service programs of the New Deal

President Franklin Roosevelt declared in 1934 that, “No country, however rich, can afford the waste of its human resources. Demoralization caused by vast unemployment is our greatest extravagance.” In an effort to pull the country out of the Great Depression, Roosevelt pushed through a series of New Deal programs. His model differed markedly from that of previous administrations, where leaders generally believed that cutting federal spending would restore stability and prosperity. President Roosevelt, influenced by progressive views, reversed this trend. With 13 million people, or one quarter of the workforce, unemployed, and the local and private means relied upon to help the victims nearing collapse, the general public was ready for a comprehensive legislative solution.

During the Great Depression, policymakers implemented programs to dramatically reduce unemployment. By 1937 these “work relief” programs helped to reduce unemployment from twenty-five percent to fourteen percent, not only putting Americans back to work but building public facilities including parks, bridges, airports and roads that are still in use today.<sup>40</sup> The two most relevant New Deal programs are the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the National Youth Administration (NYA).

As noted above, the CCC was a successful program with notable structural strengths. It began in March 1933 with two purposes: put unemployed young men back to work and use their labor to conserve natural resources. Unmarried men from eighteen to twenty-five years of age and unemployed veterans were housed in camps where they worked for room, board and thirty dollars a month. Structurally, the CCC functioned well and did not require the establishment of a new agency. Rather, it had the support of four different agencies which came together to make the program work.

The CCC represents a major success in cooperative effort between federal agencies. The Department of Labor selected enrollees, the Departments of Interior and Agriculture planned and supervised the work performed, and the Army ran the camps<sup>41</sup>. The CCC also cooperated with states and localities. It enjoyed significant support from both political parties, mainly because so many communities were in need of this kind of relief. It continued for years because of widespread public support, an effective structure and clearly observable benefits to communities. Additionally, the public perception of New Deal legislation was increasingly positive, communities around the CCC camps were

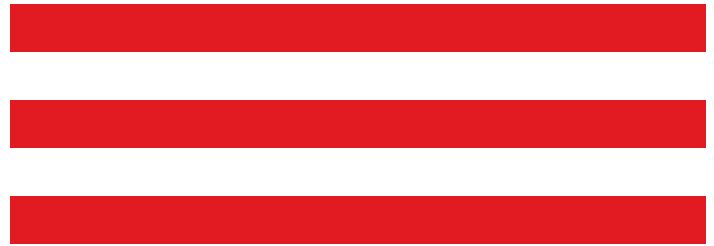
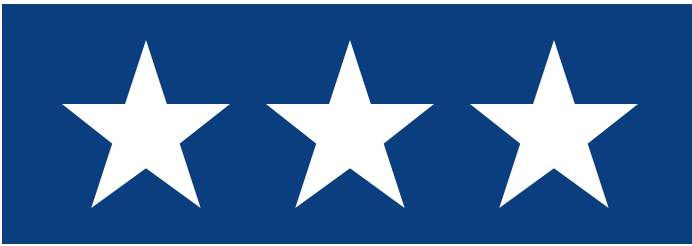
reinvigorated, and the CCC produced tangible results at community, state and federal levels.<sup>42</sup> The CCC utilized existing government infrastructure rather than creating a whole new system, and emphasized cooperation to achieve rapid implementation. Although the program could not provide a permanent answer to unemployment, it did provide immediate relief for families in need.<sup>43</sup>

The National Youth Administration (NYA), created to combat youth unemployment, demonstrates the importance of cooperation with established institutions as well as the effectiveness of helping young people pursue an education. In June 1935, when the NYA was created by executive order, fifty percent of Americans aged sixteen to twenty-four were unemployed.<sup>44</sup> While both the CCC and the NYA targeted unemployment, the NYA focused more on youth employment than on conservation work.

First, the NYA aimed to keep young people in school. More than two million students completed their education while receiving aid from NYA. These students received a stipend in exchange for performing tasks around campus, and schools or colleges generally administered these programs themselves.

Second, the NYA aimed to provide jobs for those not in school and unable to find employment. This part of the program did not enjoy cooperation with established institutions such as schools, so it was more difficult to manage. Work included cleaning up public buildings and developing local parks but soon shifted to training youth for defense industry work, and by 1942 the NYA was a big part of the war effort. While there were some difficulties that highlight the importance of cooperation with established agencies, the NYA was effective because it directed youth toward national service by offering them sufficient compensation to either stay in school or hold a productive job.

A key factor in both of these programs, as well as other New Deal employment efforts, was their focus on short-term relief. This allowed for rapid implementation but also prevented the growth and extension of the programs into the future. Such efforts are a product of their times and contingent on public support, and President Roosevelt was mainly addressing a widely perceived need to provide relief to the unemployed. Thus, the CCC tended to emphasize immediate, practical benefits to its participants rather than framing its work in the more altruistic terms of national service. Regardless, these programs helped build much of the public infrastructure we see in our country today and saved thousands of Americans from aimless destitution.



# Lessons from Other Countries

When other nations have encountered problems like those we face, such as unemployment, disconnected youth, national debt and income inequality, some have turned to national service programs with great success, and have cited the successes of efforts like AmeriCorps when proposing expansion of their own service programs. Overall, nations that have established policies of national service have lower unemployment and their citizens transition more easily into adult life thanks to the training and leadership skills they develop while serving.

## Service participants gain important employment skills

In Israel, national service offers a competitive edge of leadership and experience for young people seeking employment, especially in start-up businesses and the technology sector. With a few narrowly drawn exceptions, all Israeli citizens are required to perform military service. The service obligation is thirty-six months for enlisted men and twenty-one months for women. After completing their active duty, soldiers are subject to a reserve obligation up to age forty-one to fifty-one for men and up to age twenty-four for women.

For conscientious objectors and other exempted individuals, Israel provides an alternative to military service called *Sherut Leumi* (“national service”), which helps ensure that all young adults have some way to “give back to their country.”<sup>45</sup> Through the program’s

diverse placement options, participants are afforded the opportunity to work intensely in a professional environment and, as a result, to discover their own capabilities and explore fields of interest that may offer career options. Upon completion of service, these volunteers receive benefits equal to soldiers who serve in noncombat units, so that all service provides a pathway to employment.<sup>46</sup>

Whether service is military or civilian, the personal impact on participants is evident to employers, who applaud the professionalism, leadership skills and maturity of post-service Israeli workers. Israel has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the world and is second only to the United States in the number of its companies that are listed on the NASDAQ stock exchange.<sup>47</sup> “In 2008, per capita venture capital investments in Israel were 2.5 times greater than in the United States and more than 30 times greater than in Europe .... Israel’s economy has also grown faster than the average for developed economies of the



world in most years since 1995.”<sup>48</sup> The evidence is very strong that national service has contributed significantly to this low unemployment and robust business growth. Employers and investors report being extremely impressed with the practical skills and maturity of the young Israeli service alumni they employ. Gary Shainberg of British Telecom, who has hired young Israelis fresh out of service, says, “Nowhere else in the world do people who work in a center of technology innovation have to do national service. National service gives the young Israelis problem-solving skills, interaction with a broad range of people, and an invaluable network.”<sup>49</sup>

## Service helps reduce division and build trust between groups

Switzerland has at least three distinct ethnic groups and four official languages. One might expect this to divide the population and sow distrust between different groups, but the country’s national service program, which requires participants to learn each other’s customs and languages, helps to bridge ethnic divides while producing positive economic impacts and a broad sense of wellbeing.

Swiss men between the ages of nineteen and twenty-six are conscripted for mandatory military service, while both males and females are permitted to volunteer for the armed forces upon reaching their eighteenth birthday. Conscientious objectors have the option of serving in non-military programs such as environmental protection efforts, and men who do not serve pay a special tax of

four percent of their salary.<sup>50</sup> In addition, Switzerland has created a four-year apprenticeship program, which two-thirds of young adults choose instead of college to learn a profession as employees of a company. The on-the-job training is coupled with two days a week in the classroom.

Thus, Switzerland’s diverse groups are able to thrive together and the primacy of service has become part of the national identity. According to the “World Happiness Report” conducted by the United Nations, Switzerland is the world’s happiest nation and one of the most economically successful. In addition to boasting the longest life expectancy of any nation, Switzerland now has a higher real per capita income than the United States, a lower unemployment rate and roughly one-third the amount of government debt in relation to gross domestic product.<sup>51</sup>

Related lessons can be drawn from the experience of the United Kingdom, where leaders have become concerned about ethnic tensions and the increasing isolation of minority communities. The United Kingdom moved away from conscription and mandatory national service after World War II. Its armed forces now are all-volunteer, and non-military service is supervised by the National Citizenship Service (NCS), which partners with private employers and service organizations. Based on the success of small, under-funded voluntary service programs, the British government recently began advocating for expanding service and started a new service initiative.

The United Kingdom hopes to help break its cycle of poverty and diminish its “attainment gap” by embedding national service in its schools through “a new social action component [called ‘GiveBacc’] that students could choose to take alongside the English Baccalaureate.”

The United Kingdom Social Integration Commission calculates that “segregation in the United Kingdom across a range of factors, including ethnicity, social class and age, costs the economy £6 billion a year.”<sup>52</sup> Integrating these segments of the population is “a vital priority for [the] government, not least because of its concern over extremism.”<sup>53</sup> *Service Nation 2020* found that service programs that emphasize “social mixing” of different segments of the population can help integrate isolated groups of citizens and improve national unity. The United Kingdom’s new emphasis on social integration through service may provide useful reference points for agenda setting in the United States, where Muslim Americans, Mexican Americans, African Americans and other minorities often face isolation and distrust.

## Combining service with education as a path to employment

The United Kingdom hopes to help break its cycle of poverty and diminish its “attainment gap” by embedding national service in its schools through “a new social action component [called ‘GiveBacc’] that students could choose to take alongside the English Baccalaureate.”<sup>54</sup> In support of this approach, Jonathan Birdwell cites the success that service programs in the United States have had in helping participants transition to productive employment. In an overview of American and British initiatives, *Service Nation 2020* found that full-time service lasting at least one year delivered the best results in giving young people a fair shot at subsequent employment success.

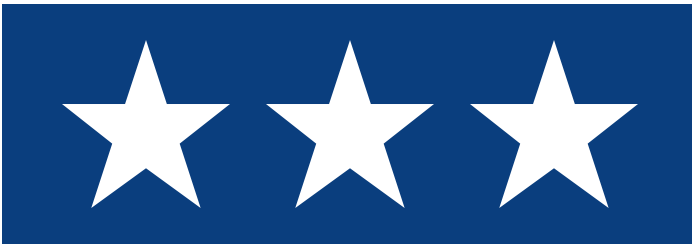
Policymakers in the United Kingdom also hope to improve the “pipeline” from service to employment. Noting that many young people considering service are worried about living expenses and their employment records, they are pursuing an “earn or learn” approach: a separate employment category for those eighteen to twenty-four years of age which offers them benefits for living expenses.<sup>55</sup> *Service Nation 2020* also recommends giving course credit for service, an idea with which some American universities are already experimenting. NCS

hopes to reach one million voluntary service “graduates” by 2020.<sup>56</sup> In order to accomplish this, it sees a critical need for online platforms where public and private employers and partners can apply to host service participants. The Service Year Exchange website in the United States is cited as a good example.

## Service builds habits of civic engagement

Echoing concerns in the United States, the United Kingdom struggles with decreasing levels of civic engagement among its youth, and policymakers are pursuing national service initiatives to help create a society “of empowered and active citizens.”<sup>57</sup> *Service Nation 2020* found social action participants “were 20 per cent more likely to express a willingness to volunteer in the future than [a] control group, and their sense of community was sixteen percentage points higher ....”

British leaders hope to create a habit of service among young people, citing a longitudinal analysis of City Year UK and United States participants which “found that three years after completing the programme, City Year alumni were still more likely to volunteer than members of the comparison group.”<sup>58</sup> Also, while “the United Kingdom has a larger gap in voter turnout between younger and older voters than any other country in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),” *Service Nation 2020* points out that City Year participants in the United States “are more likely to vote and continue to participate in the political process.”



# Current U.S. Service Programs and Legislation

Despite tight budgets, an array of service initiatives in the United States are tackling many of the societal challenges discussed in Chapter I above. These programs include the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), AmeriCorps (State and National), AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps NCCC, FEMA Corps, the Peace Corps, Job Corps, Citizen Corps, Youthbuild USA and City Year. Meanwhile, a growing number of young Americans are showing an interest in national service, and a variety of new legislative proposals, combined with existing law, suggests broad, bipartisan interest in expanding current programs and creating more opportunities to participate.<sup>59</sup>

## Current programs

**The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and AmeriCorps (State and National)** place volunteers in a variety of programs aimed at improving educational quality, helping students complete their college education, improving participants' job skills, strengthening struggling communities, and more.

CNCS is the largest facilitator of service in the United States, yet is relatively small for a country of more than three hundred million people. It provides opportunities for national service at almost 60,000 locations across the country, where its 80,000 members help mobilize more than four million volunteers for the local organizations they serve. At present, CNCS has a fiscal year budget of \$1.18 billion, with projects in six priority areas: disaster

services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, "healthy futures," and veterans and military families services.<sup>60</sup> These efforts involve collaboration with AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps NCCC, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America.

AmeriCorps (State and National) has a structure that allows efficient cooperation between levels, from its national headquarters to the local nonprofit or agency receiving a grant. AmeriCorps helps about 75,000 students per year to serve at non-profit organizations, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based initiatives across the country. These positions provide members with an opportunity to develop work skills, earn a modest income, and develop habits of civic involvement. AmeriCorps operates by providing grants to local and national organizations, along with agencies dedicated to addressing community needs. Each of the

recipient organizations, in turn, uses the funding to recruit, place and supervise AmeriCorps members. Organizations seeking grants can apply directly to the Corporation for National or Community Service if they meet certain requirements, or, more commonly, they can apply through an AmeriCorps state service commission. Program participants receive the *Segal AmeriCorps Education Award* or a post-service stipend. They also receive benefits while working in the program such as healthcare coverage, a living allowance and help with childcare.<sup>61</sup>

**AmeriCorps VISTA** has a significantly longer history. It was authorized in 1964 by the *Economic Opportunity Act*, and was designed to fight poverty. In July 1979, the VISTA program was transferred from the Office of Economic Opportunity to ACTION. Then, when CNCS was created, all ACTION programs were transferred to CNCS.

AmeriCorps VISTA members continue to serve the original VISTA goal of reducing poverty in the United States. Members make a commitment to serve fulltime on a specific project at a participating non-profit or public agency that shares the program's anti-poverty mission.<sup>62</sup> Members also help build the administrative and financial capacity of organizations that promote literacy, improve health services, foster economic development and otherwise assist low-income communities. Some members also serve in the summer months through the AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associate program, which focuses on projects lasting eight to ten weeks. Each year about 6,500 VISTA participants are placed in more than 1,200 projects in low-income communities around the country.<sup>63</sup> The member's role is to serve as a short-term resource to help sponsoring organizations achieve long-lasting solutions to poverty.

**AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)** is a fulltime residential program for men and woman ages eighteen to twenty-four, based on the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) model. It is organized as five "campuses," each serving a region of the country and assigning participants to projects within the region. Sponsoring groups request grant money by submitting a project application to the campus covering their state.

AmeriCorps NCCC volunteers work in teams of eight to twelve individuals and are trained in CPR, first aid, public safety and other skills before starting their first service assignment. The program's projects are conducted in partnership with non-profit groups (both secular and faith-based), local municipalities, state governments, federal agencies, state and national parks, and Native American tribes and schools. AmeriCorps NCCC is based on the



belief that civic involvement is a duty of all citizens and that national service programs must work closely with local communities in order to address needs effectively.<sup>64</sup>

**FEMA Corps** is a program of just 1,600 members devoted solely to disaster preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. It was established within AmeriCorps NCCC by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and CNCS. Participants serve a fulltime ten-month term, with an option to extend for a second year, and work in groups of eight to twelve on projects assigned by region. CNCS and FEMA work together to enhance the federal government's disaster response capabilities, increase the reliability and diversity of the disaster workforce, and promote an ethic of service. They achieved a cost savings of more than \$350 million in the first five years of the program.<sup>65</sup>

**The Peace Corps** has worked for more than fifty years in more than 140 countries to promote world peace and friendship. In partnership with host governments and other organizations, Peace Corps volunteers serve fulltime in-country for two years, working directly with local communities on their most pressing issues. Projects range from improving agricultural techniques, to economic development, to advancements in education, to resource conservation, to upgrading healthcare, to developmental programs for youth.

Meanwhile, Peace Corps members gain valuable international experience and cross-cultural understanding, along with fluency in a foreign language. Applicants can request assignment to any country in which the Corps



has an established presence, and members are offered several different programs in which to participate, such as Peace Corps Response and the Global Health Service Partnership. Also, many universities provide opportunities for their students (both undergraduate and graduate) to pursue the Peace Corps experience while in school.<sup>66</sup>

**Job Corps** is a United States Department of Labor program that provides free education and training to young people to help them prepare for a career, earn a high school diploma or GED and find and keep a good job. The program also gives participants an opportunity to earn college credits, offering technical training in more than 100 career areas. Student participants receive housing, meals, basic healthcare, a living allowance, job training and other career preparation, free of charge. In addition, a career transition counselor helps students find a job and connects them with local housing, transportation and childcare resources.<sup>67</sup>

**Youthbuild USA** helps unemployed sixteen to twenty-four year olds find a pathway to jobs, education and other opportunities. Low-income individuals who participate in this program can help rebuild their communities and their lives while breaking the cycle of poverty. Participants learn construction skills through building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people, along with other neighborhood assets such as schools, playgrounds and community centers. Youthbuild USA has a network of 260 urban and rural programs in forty-six states. It is sponsored and managed by various colleges and non-profit organizations, but the Department of Labor provides the majority of its funding.<sup>68</sup>

**Citizen Corps** was created in January 2002 in response to the terrorist attacks on America on September 11, 2001. It was designed as a means for citizens to aid in protecting the homeland and supporting local first responders. Members participate in a range of measures to make their families, their homes and their communities safer from the threats of crime, terrorism, and disasters of all kinds.

Citizen Corps is coordinated nationally by FEMA who works closely with other federal entities, state and local governments, first responders, emergency managers, the volunteer community and CNCS.

**City Year** is a highly organized and effective service program aimed at improving education in some of America's poorest communities. The organization works to "bridge the gap in high-poverty communities between the support that students actually need, and what their schools are designed and resourced to provide."<sup>69</sup> It was founded in 1988 by Michael Brown and Alan Khazei, who were roommates at Harvard Law School at the time and "felt strongly that young people in service could be a powerful resource for addressing some of America's most pressing issues."<sup>70</sup> The name was chosen to suggest that those who have had the privilege of a four-year college education should also "dedicate themselves to a 'city-year' of fulltime service, idealism, civic engagement, and leadership development."<sup>71</sup>

City Year is funded under AmeriCorps as well as through "support from individuals, foundations, businesses, state and local governments and school districts."<sup>72</sup> For example, through its "Team Sponsor Program" a



corporate sponsor can fund a team of eight to twelve City Year members for one year with a \$100,000 donation.<sup>73</sup> The team sponsor may send employees to join in volunteer activities and City Year also offers “co-branding” on event materials and the City Year jackets.

City Year has another category of “National Leadership Sponsors” for those who have donated more than \$1 million. These include donors such as Pepsi, Cisco Foundation, and Microsoft.<sup>74</sup> With its sophisticated funding strategy and strong organizational culture, City Year provides an excellent example of a successful and growth-oriented service program.

For volunteers who work for more than an 11-month period, City Year provides a stipend and health insurance, as well as an education award and eligibility for scholarships at various educational institutions. The program’s website explains: “As a member of the federal AmeriCorps program, [volunteers] are eligible to earn the *Segal Education Award* (valued at \$5,734) ... which can go toward pursuing further education or to pay off existing, qualified student loans.” In addition, City Year identifies a number of other, non-tangible benefits of volunteering, such as development of “leadership and professional skills.”<sup>75</sup> Finally, City Year has an established network of City Year alumni and is affiliated with the “Serveyear Campaign,” which seeks to “inspire tens of millions of Americans – especially Millennials – to spend a year in service working on issues in education.”<sup>76</sup> Organized by ServiceNation, Serveyear unites “leading service nonprofits with the entertainment industry, leading Americans, great companies, media and digital partners, politicians of both parties, and everyday citizens to build a powerful campaign to make national service part of the American way of life.” City Year is one of the referenced “leading service nonprofits.”<sup>77</sup>

**New York City Service**, like City Year, is a good example of a high-impact, sustainable service organization. The program was “launched in April 2009 in response to President Obama’s national call for volunteerism and a goal of engaging 100 million Americans in service by 2020.”<sup>78</sup> It was the first “city of service” program, which now has a network of over 190 cities.<sup>79</sup> Through its “NYC Civic Corp,” New York City Service partners with AmeriCorps to place volunteers in a ten-month volunteer role in a non-profit or city organization.<sup>80</sup> In addition to funding from the city, the organization also has “Corporate Service Strategic Partners,” including corporations such as Disney, Deutsche Bank and IBM.<sup>81</sup>

The organization works to “bridge the gap in high-poverty communities between the support that students actually need, and what their schools are designed and resourced to provide.”

New York City Service is at the forefront of utilizing technology to reach its goal of facilitating service opportunities in New York City. The NYC Service Volunteer App for iPhone “allows users to discover New York City service opportunities on the go, according to their interests, skills, and schedules.”<sup>82</sup> “Created in partnership with SocialEffort and Sid Lee NY,” the app allows users to filter volunteer opportunities based on interests and to share volunteer opportunities through social media.<sup>83</sup>

Also, at the state level, **Volunteer Florida**, **California Volunteers** and **Serve Washington** are three organizations tasked with management of volunteer opportunities for their respective states. Each serves as a strong example of service opportunity management on a statewide basis, and each is affiliated with AmeriCorps.

**The Franklin Project** at the Aspen Institute is a key voice in the service movement, and the Project’s action plan is particularly promising. The Project is dedicated to making “a year of full time national service ... a cultural expectation.”<sup>84</sup> The idea for its creation came into being at the Aspen Ideas Festival in 2012 when retired General Stanley McChrystal made comments concerning the drop in military service participation while noting that “citizenship in our country has atrophied” and that “we suffer from a general lack of connectedness.”<sup>85</sup> A more expansive national service model was mentioned as a “possible solution.”<sup>86</sup> The following year, the Franklin Project was created at the Aspen Institute. The effort aspires to engage young people, ages eighteen to twenty-eight, in “a fully paid, full-time year of service in one of an array of areas, including health, poverty, conservation, or education.”<sup>87</sup>

## Lessons from current programs

Looking at the various approaches to national service initiatives in the United States, a broad “umbrella” structure of one coordinating agency with multiple targeted participating programs appears to be the most

successful. Both CNCS and AmeriCorps coordinate a wide range of programs that serve specific purposes, giving applicants the flexibility to choose an area of focus that seems most appealing. A major strength of this structure is that it can provide a broader choice of benefits as it recruits partners in more fields and locations, and this flexibility makes a program more able to adapt to meet evolving policy goals.

Strong working partnerships are key to successful programs within this umbrella structure. They allow overseeing agencies or programs to consolidate support and leverage funding to accomplish policy goals. For example, CNCS partners with other federal agencies and private sector and non-profit groups, and “leverages more than one million dollars in outside resources for every dollar it invests to strengthen community impact and increase return on taxpayer dollars.”<sup>88</sup>

The most effective programs increasingly rely on digital technology platforms to efficiently manage partnerships, attract new participants and support service alumni. For example, the Service Nation Alliance recently developed the Service Year Exchange, an online platform that prospective and current Corps members can use to research opportunities, fundraise, share experiences, and provide educational resources online. Companies or organizations interested in hosting a year of service, as well as potential participants that aren’t sure where they want to serve, can log on to Service Year Exchange and explore their options or request new partnerships. Collecting information on the scale, structure, and operating procedures of the most successful programs will be key for future expansion. For example, CNCS maintains The Social Innovation Fund, which collects data about what programs most completely and efficiently meet policy goals.<sup>89</sup> This information can give policymakers and voters increased confidence when it shows that specific models nominated for replication or expansion already have a successful record.

## **Pertinent legislation, executive orders and proposals**

Viewed together, existing service-related legislation and executive orders, along with recent proposals for service expansion, demonstrate longstanding bipartisan support for national service. United States policymakers tend to acknowledge that the shortage of civilian service opportunities is costing America in multiple ways and recognize that expanding existing programs has

advantages over creating entirely new initiatives. Recent proposals have aimed to realize the full potential of existing legislation like the *Serve America Act* (SAA) and the recommendations of the President’s Task Force on Expanding Community Service.

### **Presidential Memorandum on Expanding National Service**

National service has been a priority for a number of recent presidents, and President Obama was no exception. Early in his presidency, he signed the SAA and his administration introduced new service initiatives to try to accommodate the growing numbers of individuals interested in serving. In 2013, President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum on Expanding National Service. Directed to the heads of executive departments and agencies, the Memorandum begins by describing the value of national service and its importance to American identity. It then considers the expansion of CNCS through the SAA and describes the six areas of focus under the SAA – specifically “emergency and disaster services; economic opportunity; education; environmental stewardship; healthy futures; and veteran and military families.”

The Memorandum then explains that under the SAA, CNCS has “greater opportunities . . . to partner with other executive departments and agencies and with the private sector to utilize national service to address these critical areas.” The President directed the establishment of “a Task Force on Expanding National Service . . . co-chaired by the Chief Executive Office of CNCS and the Director of the Domestic Policy Council.” The task force includes representatives from “agencies and offices that administer programs and develop policy” related to the six focus areas noted above.

The Memorandum describes several functions of the task force, including: identification and recommendation of new policies for promoting and expanding national service, development of partnerships between public and private entities to support national service expansion, and identification and development of opportunities to utilize technology more effectively to expand national service. Section 2 of the Memorandum further instructs that the task force must provide a report to the president on progress made under the enumerated objectives within eighteen months.

The Memorandum and resulting task force and report demonstrate President Obama’s commitment to national



service and his desire to expand existing programs. It seems logical that President Trump would want to carry that commitment forward, in light of the proven cost-effectiveness of national service programs and his stated commitment to controlling domestic spending.

### **The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009**

In April of 2009, President Obama signed into law the *Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act*. The law was first introduced in the Senate earlier that year by Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) and Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) as the *Serve America Act* (S. 277) and was passed by an impressively bipartisan vote of 79-19 on March 26. Senator Hatch noted that, “at every stage, Republicans and Democrats have been working together to craft this legislation in order to bring it where we have it today.”

The Act reauthorizes CNCS and expands its impact in a number of ways. First, through a variety of novel programs, it offers new national service opportunities for young people. For example, it creates a Summer of Service program for students in grades 6 through 12 and a Semester of Service program for high school students. It provides for the expansion of AmeriCorps “from 75,000 positions annually to 250,000 by 2017.” In addition, it “improves service options for experienced Americans by expanding age and income eligibility for Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions” and by offering transferable educational credits upon completion of a set number of service hours.

The *Edward M. Kennedy Act* further provides for greater innovation and expansion of the non-profit sector. It creates a Social Innovation Fund “to expand proven initiatives and provide seed funding for experimental initiatives.” It establishes a Volunteer Generation Fund “to award grants to states and nonprofits to recruit, manage, and support volunteers and strengthen the nation’s volunteer infrastructure,” and also authorizes grants for “NonProfit Capacity Building” in order to “provide organizational development assistance to small and mid-size nonprofit organizations.”

Finally, the *Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act* seeks to fortify management efficiency and accountability. For example, it “[e]nsures that programs receiving assistance under national service laws are continuously evaluated for effectiveness in achieving performance and cost goals.” Further, the Act “authorizes a Civic Health Assessment comprised of indicators relating to volunteering, voting, charitable giving, and interest in public service in order to evaluate and compare the civic health of communities.”

In the nearly six years since the SAA became law, success has been mixed, with budgetary constraints posing the greatest obstacle. In an article titled “Five Years Later: Grading Washington on its Progress to Expand National service,” the organization ServiceNation (now part of Service Year) provides a report card rating the Act’s success in accomplishing its stated objectives. Washington receives an F on the goal of expanding AmeriCorps to 250,000 participants. The article explains that there were 582,000 applications for AmeriCorps positions in 2011

The *Edward M. Kennedy Act* further provides for greater innovation and expansion of the non-profit sector. It creates a Social Innovation Fund “to expand proven initiatives and provide seed funding for experimental initiatives.”

and that fewer than 80,000 individuals were serving through AmeriCorps in 2014.

The report also confers an F on the effort to expand service opportunities “for retiring professionals and older Americans,” citing recent budget cuts to a number of programs. Washington receives an A, however, for its efforts to focus national service on the areas enumerated under the Act, as well as its enhancement of “support for organizations and public agencies responding to natural disasters.” Thus, the findings demonstrate that the SAA has been effective in some ways and less effective in others. It appears likely that the measure would have the kind of impact that was envisioned upon its enactment if more funding were allocated.

Various other pieces of legislation have been introduced in Congress in recent years aimed at promoting and expanding national service. What follows is a sampling of those proposals and is by no means an exhaustive list.

### **The Encore Service Act of 2009**

Introduced by then-Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT), the *Encore Service Act of 2009* (S. 467) was co-sponsored by six Democrats and one Republican. A related bill, also called the *Encore Service Act*, was introduced in the House of Representatives that year by Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT). The House measure was co-sponsored by twelve other representatives, all Democrats. Both bills sought to “[amend] the *National and Community Service Act of 1990* to make eligible for assistance under the National Service Trust program Encore Service programs that engage individuals age fifty years old or older in national service addressing specific community needs.” The bills were sent for review by subcommittees in both the House and the Senate and did not become law.

### **The Summer of Service Act of 2009**

This bill (H.R. 1153) was introduced in the House by Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) in February of 2009, and a related bill was introduced in the Senate on the

same day by Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT). The House bill was co-sponsored by eighteen Democrats and the Senate bill by six Democrats and one Republican. The measure sought to “[amend] the *National and Community Service Act of 1990* to create “Summer of Service” programs providing at least 100 hours of summer community service learning opportunities to youth who will subsequently enroll in grades six through nine.” In both cases the bill was referred to committee for consideration.

### **The Congressional Commission on Civic Services Act**

This proposal (H.R. 1444) was introduced by Representative Jim McDermott (D-WA) in March of 2009. The bill had seven co-sponsors, all Democrats. It sought “to establish [a] Congressional Commission on Civic Service to study methods of improving and promoting volunteerism and national service,” along with other objectives.

### **An Amendment to Launch a Veterans Corps Program**

In March of 2009, Senator Mark Warner (D-VA) introduced a measure (S. 606) to amend the *National and Community Service Act of 1990*. The bill sought to launch “a Veteran Corps program that meets specified unmet needs of members of the Armed Forces and veterans, as well as their families.” Senator Warner was the sole sponsor.

### **The Promoting National Service and Reducing Unemployment Act**

In 2014, the District of Columbia’s non-voting delegate in the House of Representatives, Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), introduced the *Promoting National Service and Reducing Unemployment Act* (H.R. 4054). The bill would have increased appropriations to the CNCS to help with salary and administrative expenses and funding of the Office of Inspector General. Additionally, the bill would have “[required] AmeriCorps to: (1) use the funds to increase the number of national service positions



approved under the *National and Community Service Act of 1990* to 500,000, and (2) give preference to national service programs that propose to use full-time national service positions.” The bill had three co-sponsors, all Democrats. It was referred to the House Committee on Appropriations for consideration.

### **The 21st Century Conservation Service Corps Act**

Senator John McCain (R-AZ) introduced the *21st Century Conservation Service Corps Act of 2015* (S.1993) on August 5, 2015. It was co-sponsored by Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO). The bill sought to “establish the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps to place youth and veterans in the United States in national service positions to protect, restore, and enhance the great outdoors of the United States” and accomplish other purposes. It called on youth and veterans to participate in projects such as “serving in national service positions to help protect, restore, enhance, and increase public access to and use of national parks, public and tribal land or water, and natural, cultural, and historical resources and treasures for the enjoyment and use of future generations” (S.1993 Section 2(1)). The bill proposed novel forms of funding, such as crowd-funding, and the soliciting of contributions from public and private sources in addition to its target organizations (See S.1993 Section 7: Funding). The bipartisan bill had no other co-sponsors, and was referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for review.

### **Leveraging existing service programs**

Two proposals are notable because they illustrate policymaker recognition that utilizing the existing AmeriCorps and CNCS infrastructure can enhance administrative efficiency. First, Tammy Duckworth, a former Black Hawk pilot who became a United States Representative for the 8th congressional district of Illinois, introduced the *21st Century American Service Act*, which proposed to “build on the existing infrastructure” by “lowering barriers to participating in national service and expanding the network of quality volunteer opportunities to address national priorities and promote a sense of shared purpose.”

Another example is the *Promoting National Service and Reducing Unemployment Act* mentioned above. It focused on the nearly 2.2 million recent high school and college graduates who were unemployed, and aimed to increase civilian service positions by making supplemental appropriations to AmeriCorps for that fiscal year.

### **Considerations going forward**

#### **Funding, administrative and bureaucratic concerns**

Surveys show that Americans overwhelmingly believe that increased funding for national service programs would be worth the investment.<sup>90</sup> A 2016 study by the market research firm TargetPoint found that eighty-three percent of voters, including seventy-eight percent of Republicans,

eighty-four percent of Independents, seventy-eight percent of Tea Party voters, and ninety percent of Democrats, want Congress to maintain or increase the levels of federal spending on national service.

Meanwhile, the Aspen Institute estimates that increasing service participation to one million individuals in the United States would cost \$20.7 billion but would result in economic benefits totaling \$92.6 billion. In other words, “the benefits would exceed the costs by a factor of 4.5.”<sup>91</sup> Benefits of service include higher earnings and increased output, along with other gains. The Aspen Institute summarizes: “While some of these proposals are costly ... long-term benefits would outweigh the costs. In any case, these are proposals that could reshape how government works since it implies a significantly greater citizen involvement in defining and delivering public (if not governmental) services.”

As recognized in recent legislative proposals, building on the existing AmeriCorps structure keeps the net cost of expansion low and avoids bureaucratic complications. Choosing which programs show the most potential for long-term expansion becomes easier with each passing year as data continues to be collected on successful program models.

President Obama’s FY 2017 budget requested \$1.1 billion in funding for CNCS. This amount was nearly equal to the administration’s FY 2016 request, while still falling short of the promise of the *Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act*. Keeping actual allocations stable was a significant challenge, as Congressional leaders proposed in June 2015 to cut national service funding for CNCS programs by almost sixty percent.<sup>92</sup> Congress changed its approach by December of that year, agreeing to preserve or moderately increase funding levels for many CNCS programs.

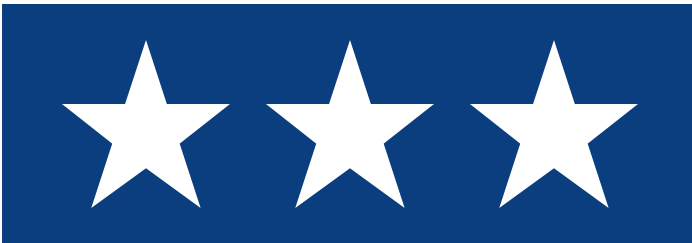
An important resource for policymakers is the Social Innovation Fund (SIF), which was established early in the Obama administration to identify the most promising and effective non-profit programs around the country so their reach can be expanded. Unfortunately, the SIF is seriously underfunded. In FY 2014 and again in FY 2015, it was allotted a mere \$70,000.<sup>93</sup> The FY 2016 budget reduced that to \$50,000, and the figure remains at that level for FY 2017. Ensuring that SIF has the funding it needs to continue to compile evidence-based program proposals is a significant concern. Policymakers need sound data on which to base their specific funding decisions.

An interesting alternative funding option for national service programs is “crowd-funding,” or soliciting funds online from private and institutional donors who support the service effort. Service Year Exchange allows individual participants to crowd-fund to generate the stipends they receive to cover living expenses during their year of service. This can lead to new partnerships and opportunities as sponsors are recruited. Many private companies and foundations invest in service efforts, providing nearly \$1 billion in 2015 alone.<sup>94</sup>

### **National service in the new administration**

Will our newly elected president recognize and embrace the power of America’s national service initiatives? Doing so could significantly improve his chances for a successful presidency. Very few other problem-solving tools available to government can claim such broad popular support, such a strong historical footing, or such an impressive cost-benefit ratio. Indeed, in light of continuing federal deficits and President Trump’s stated commitment to rein in domestic spending, it is hard to see how he could accomplish his ambitious goals for the country without making aggressive use of our various national service programs and significantly expanding their reach.

Last year, when the presidential election was not yet decided, Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and former U.S. defense secretary Leon Panetta observed: “When the next president of the United States takes the oath of office, at least one important idea should be a centerpiece of his or her vision of our nation’s future .... It is an idea that enjoys broad bipartisan support and that we believe can unify the nation and benefit the youth of America – voluntary national service.” Each of our last four presidents – two Republicans and two Democrats – called for an expansion of opportunities to serve. From President George H.W. Bush came the Points of Light initiative, and President Bill Clinton launched AmeriCorps. President George W. Bush brought us the USA Freedom Corps, and President Obama signed into law the SAA. Support for expanding national service has a solidly bipartisan pedigree. In fact, every president since Franklin Roosevelt has recognized the importance of this “connective tissue” to our national identity and success and made an effort to reinforce it in some way.



# Recommendations

## Agenda-setting: getting the attention of policymakers and the public

While the concept of national service already enjoys strong bipartisan support among the public, spurring policymakers to action will require significant efforts to mobilize that support and highlight the benefits of these initiatives. Good models for such efforts can be found in past campaigns by organizations such as Be the Change and Service Year. Getting the attention of the public and policymakers increasingly involves skillful use of both conventional and new media and the engagement of celebrities and respected public figures to advocate and educate in forums where the target audiences are most active.

### Stress the role of the private sector

As already noted, the private sector plays a significant role in the United States in funding national service efforts. Identifying existing contributors to initiatives such as Service Year Alliance and encouraging their further engagement can lay the groundwork for increasing public and policymaker support.

Also, Professor Hugh Lauder, director of the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Bath, recommends directly engaging policymakers by inviting them to university lectures and events, as well as maintaining a strong media presence to increase support. One approach could be the presentation of a public lecture series on national service. Another might be the recruitment of service-supporting policymakers by entertainment producers to make guest appearances on popular TV shows. For example, President Obama's guest appearance on HBO's *VICE*, where he discussed prison reform, enjoyed wide viewership, stimulated dialogue on the issue, and heightened the demand for change.

## Learn from the successes of proven lobbying campaigns

Founded in 2007 to lobby for national service, Be the Change, Inc. is one of the most successful examples of leveraging private funding to win the attention of policymakers. It manages three campaigns: Service Year Alliance, Opportunity Nation, and Got Your 6. Be the Change has developed an impressive and expanding financial support base, with contributors including Macy's, NBC, Comcast, Starbucks and other major companies, along with individual donors, foundations and government entities. In 2007 alone, Be the Change secured \$18 million in grants and a million increase in AmeriCorps funding from Congress to help accomplish objectives such as increasing the number of AmeriCorps positions and funding technology platforms to improve program efficiency and evaluation of potential service providers.<sup>95</sup>

More than 350 businesses, educational institutions, nonprofits and civic organizations brought together by Be the Change have formed the Opportunity Nation Coalition, a collaboration that was instrumental in passing the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*. Be the Change also helped win a 230 percent expansion of the national service support authorized by the *Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act*.<sup>96</sup>

## Use social media to make service a priority for younger Americans

Service Year Alliance, one of the campaigns managed by Be the Change, has used a grass roots approach to flood policymakers with appeals for better funding and with supporting information on the accomplishments of current service programs. Ninety-three percent of Members of Congress engaged by local leaders and constituents



activated by ServiceNation’s state directors have increased their support for AmeriCorps and Senior Corps.<sup>97</sup>

Social media platforms are a low-cost and highly effective means of strengthening advocacy efforts. As Lauder from the University of Bath notes, “public demand for a new national service initiative can increase the pressure on policymakers to acknowledge the need for and potential of national service,” and one of the “most successful path to public awareness is a strong media presence with a clear message that includes ways to learn more about the topic (such as links to social media platforms).”

### **Arrange mentions of national service in popular shows**

Service programs are increasingly recognizing that their public profile and support can be raised dramatically through mentions of their efforts in popular movies and TV shows. “The public often doesn’t see the impact of national service,” says Zach Maurin, Service Year executive director. “It’s out of sight, out of mind. It makes partnering with the entertainment industry even more valuable.” The organization is therefore mounting a “culture campaign” to “put national service back on the to-do list for Americans.”

Recently, representatives from the Clinton Foundation, which helps fund Service Year, met with the organization’s representatives and key figures in the entertainment industry to promote the mention of national service opportunities and successes in popular shows – an

effort that expanded the organization’s partnerships with networks, celebrities and writers. Even a brief mention on such a show can significantly increase public awareness and support. According to a 2015 article in the *Hollywood Reporter*, when AmeriCorps was mentioned in an episode of HBO’s *True Detective*, the program saw a major boost in interest, including a spike in Google searches.

## **Increase service opportunities**

### **Strengthen the link to higher education**

Across our country, students are struggling to pay for college, and many fail to complete their schooling because of staggering student debt. Schools can help solve this problem by establishing and strengthening partnerships with national service programs. Schools should be providing “service scholarships,” encouraging their students to compete in “best service plan for our school” competitions, and increasing awareness among college applicants of the benefits of choosing a “strong service school.” They can also engage employers and employment recruiters in the promotion of national service and should be working toward the goal of making a year of service an integrated part of a student’s education.

Incentives for student participation in national service programs can include tuition assistance, scholarships, and the awarding of college credit for the service experience. While obviously helping the student by providing some income during the period of service and



improving his or her prospects for gainful employment later, the educational institution and the government also benefit from the increased likelihood that participating students will be able to fulfill their loan repayment obligations, pay more taxes based on better future earnings, and become contributing supporters of the alma mater. This is why the Service Alliance, for example, “is building partnerships with more than 150 higher education institutions with the goal of making the Service Year a college credit program that will earn Corps members a Service Year Transcript upon completion.”<sup>98</sup> The Franklin Project also recognized this potential link in its action plan for 2016, which recommended “working with states and universities to expand national service and to create service-year models.”

There is strong evidence that service programs have their greatest benefit both to targeted communities and to participating volunteers when they require a full year of service. Accordingly, colleges and universities incorporating national service into their curriculum should include a full-year requirement for those who participate. As noted above, national service as a component of a student’s education provides valuable real-world experience and greatly improves the student’s prospects for future employment. Last year Shirley Sagawa and Harry Stein of the Center for American Progress noted: “Currently, the service experience is too disconnected from higher education, and seen as distinct from the traditional academic or professional path; instead, they need to be integrated into higher education.”

Schools should be encouraged to include service components in their curriculum and service certificates among their degrees, and tuition assistance and coverage of living expenses should also be provided, if possible, to students committing to a year of service. Tufts University has a “1 plus 4” option, where students spend a year in service before freshman year, and Tulane offers “4 plus 1,” where students perform a year of service in New Orleans after graduation.<sup>99</sup> In addition, colleges could mount efforts like the “Service Year + Higher Education Challenge” at the Aspen Institute, which “encourages post-secondary institutions to propose creative ideas for connecting a year of service to academic credit” and offers cash prizes to public, private and community college entrants for the best ideas.<sup>100</sup>

Moving forward, it would also be helpful to gather more data on whether young people would be interested in relocating for college and service in exchange for certain incentives. The potential positive impact that serving students would have on college campuses and

their surrounding communities should be attractive to colleges. It would be interesting to know whether schools would be more willing to offer incentives for a connected year of service if participating students committed to performing that service in a nearby community or for a cause integral to the mission of the school.

### **Targeted national service: groups in transition**

An array of recent survey research has indicated that personal sense of duty and purpose has been declining among Americans. The cycle of poverty is further entrenched and opportunities are lost when Americans are increasingly disconnected from their communities, from one another and from the political process. We recommend a “targeted national service” initiative concentrating on providing training, employment assistance, and support to groups in transition, including newly-released non-violent offenders, immigrants who qualify for citizenship or are embarking on that process, and veterans returning from combat.

“Targeted national service” would use the existing service infrastructure to provide critical help to groups in high-stakes transitions into civil society. Such transitions are periods of opportunity, whether the move is from school to adult life and employment, from the battlefield to the office, from immigrant status to full citizenship, or from serving time in prison to building a new life. Individuals in these situations face critical life challenges and could benefit from placement in existing national service programs that promote a constructive transition into American life. The benefits include resume building, outlook adjusting and skills training, as well as improving outcomes and renewing a sense of common purpose.

For psychologically wounded warriors, this initiative could include the continuation of participants’ military pay and benefits, along with counseling and therapy support from the Veterans Administration. Programs for qualified immigrants and released convicts would require the collaboration of Homeland Security and correctional authorities to facilitate the participants’ constructive transition into civil society through national service. Key steps to increasing targeted service include full funding of the bipartisan *Serve America Act of 2009*, and establishment of a GI Bill Civilian Service Option “so that returning veterans can use a portion of their benefits toward a term of civilian service to help their transition.”<sup>101</sup>

## Branding service as the problem-solving tool for leadership

Our ever-increasing national debt means America needs to find more cost-effective ways to rebuild our infrastructure, respond to disasters and environmental challenges, improve medical care and control medical costs. Expanding service opportunities by fully funding the SAA can provide needed job training and address important societal needs with the lowest amount of government spending. Every effort should be made, through documentaries, news specials, brand placement and other media exposure, to identify national service programs in the minds of administration and congressional leaders as a problem-solving tool for the country.

Voters want more job and training opportunities, but also want to hold down federal spending. According to a 2015 report by CNCS on veterans and military families “National service delivers greater than a 3-to-1 return on investment, and ... those returns increase with scale.” Advocacy groups can help advance this educational movement. To maintain pressure and increase demand, we recommend, as noted above, expanding media partnerships and brand placements with the ultimate goal of making AmeriCorps as well known as the Army, and City Year as recognized as the Peace Corps.

## Pathways from service to employment

Although it has declined substantially over the past eight years, unemployment is still a major national concern, with stubbornly high rates of joblessness remaining in certain regions and among some demographic groups. And many Americans who do have jobs are earning far less than they were making a decade ago. We recommend strengthening the pathway between service and employment so that young people can be confident that service will not only be a meaningful experience in itself but will lead to a more rewarding career.

For example, Employers of National Service (ENS) is an initiative that connects AmeriCorps and Peace Corps alumni with leading employers to create recruitment, hiring and advancement opportunities and “ensure that a service year becomes part of a deliberate, credentialed pathway to employment.”<sup>102</sup> Since 2014, more than 300 companies, nonprofits and public agencies have signed on (CNCS). This model could be duplicated by states, and funding of ENS could be increased. Also, awareness of the potential benefits of joining ENS or the benefits of hosting service participants should be promoted to business

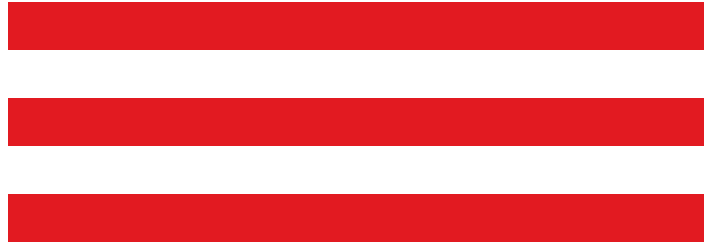
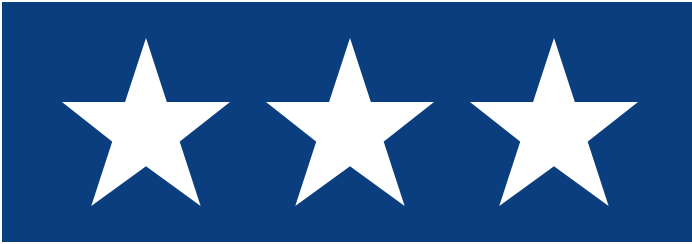
## Voters want more job and training opportunities, but also want to hold down federal spending.

leaders at various events, conferences, budget meetings and so on. With more funding and a greater ability to offer employers incentives, programs like ENS could connect larger numbers of national service alumni to leading employers from the public, private and nonprofit sectors. It means building what the Franklin Project calls “an ecosystem for national service in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”<sup>103</sup>

## Targeted funding for future expansion

When voters and policymakers agree that service opportunities should be expanded, providing evidence-based models and data on successful structures and practices will be critical to quick implementation and further increases in support. We recommend increasing funding to the Social Innovation Fund (SIF) and stress the importance of supporting programs that track what works and what doesn't beyond what we know today.

Of the many CNCS programs, the SIF, while relatively small and with very little funding, will be one of the most important resources for advocates of expanding service opportunities. SIF focuses on gathering information on a wide variety of programs and developing evidence-based solutions to maximize return on federal investment. As noted in the funding discussion above, the FY 2017 federal budget has yet to restore the \$20,000 recently cut from the SIF's budget.



# A Call to Action

As the Franklin Project has observed, there are AmeriCorps programs today where, for each position filled, a dozen eager applicants are turned away. How much of this untapped potential can our country afford to ignore?

We cannot afford, financially or morally, to lose these idealistic and highly motivated service volunteers to discouragement and disengagement when the national need for their talents is so great. The striking successes of current programs point to an evidence-based solution that can draw bipartisan support: make expanding national service opportunities a priority in the United States.

The argument for such an expansion becomes even stronger when we consider that the successes of these programs to date have been achieved, for the most part, on very small budgets, with little public awareness and with a limited number of outside partnerships. If national service can work so well under these constricted conditions – so much so that other nations like the United Kingdom cite the successes of AmeriCorps and City Year when petitioning for expansion – the potential benefits of expanding service programs should invigorate concerned citizens and policymakers with new hope.

A materially stronger commitment to national service programs can help solve some of the most challenging problems we face today. The impact of the service experience is life-long and includes benefits to communities and the nation as a whole in addition to the individual participant. An increase in national service opportunities can help reverse our declining sense of national purpose and patriotism while encouraging habits of service and civic participation that are vital to healthy communities and a functioning democracy. Service can

help engage disconnected youth, increase their political participation and directly improve their communities in ways that continue long after the period of service ends. Americans of different backgrounds, races and religions can find common ground through the experience of serving together, creating trust and understanding in place of prejudice and suspicion.

In addition, increasing the number of service positions makes good economic sense. It can save taxpayers billions of dollars, providing low-risk, cost-effective investment in areas of major national concern. It can save millions of dollars on needed infrastructure projects, fortifying the nation without ballooning the national debt, while providing participants with skills, training and other long-term benefits in the process.

Meanwhile, well-designed service programs with links to colleges and universities can help ameliorate the student debt crisis, offering debt payment programs, stipends for living expenses and other aids to financial stability and self-reliance for participants. National

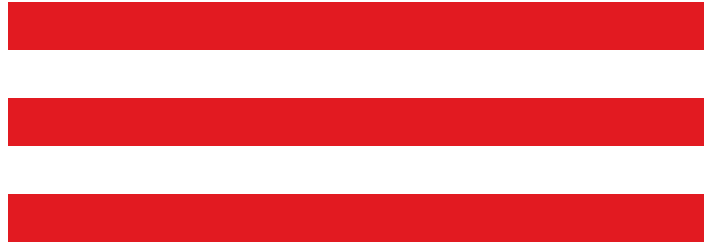
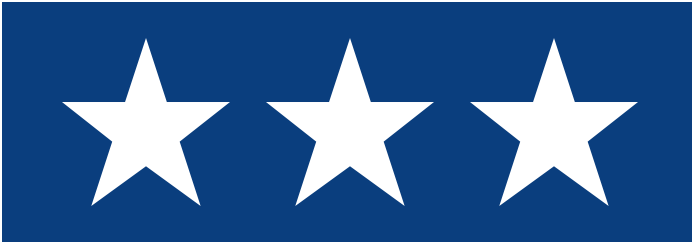


service also makes participants significantly more employable and more confident and successful in their careers, and it provides a common-ground experience to future leaders, who are more likely after such an experience to consider alternative points of view and achieve problem-solving consensus.

As noted also, service initiatives can strengthen America's disaster response capabilities and promote natural resource protection, environmental education and "green job" training while helping to maintain parks and playgrounds for the enjoyment of future generations. And finally, healthcare delivery systems can greatly benefit from an increased reliance on national service participants, giving patients better access to services like in-home and wellness care and ensuring that veterans get the quality care and transitional assistance they deserve.

Americans who step forward to serve, who demonstrate that they clearly have the necessary talent and desire, should not have to be turned away for lack of available positions when so many national problems need attention. While service participants discharge their duty to country in many different ways, we as citizens and policymakers have a responsibility to provide those opportunities and re-establish service as a way of life in this country.

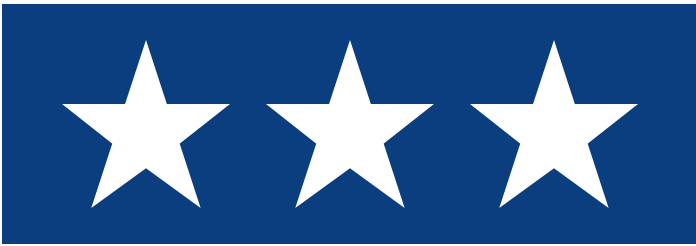
The impact of the service experience is life-long and includes benefits to communities and the nation as a whole in addition to the individual participant.



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