



Cultivating Opportunity and Response to the Pandemic through Service (CORPS) Act

Senators Chris Coons, Roger Wicker, Cory Booker, Lindsey Graham, Jack Reed, Marco Rubio, Tammy Duckworth, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Kamala Harris, Bill Cassidy, Tammy Baldwin, John Cornyn, Angus King, and Susan Collins

Background: The United States has a strong history of citizen response to national calls to service in times of crisis. More than eighty years ago, our nation rose to the challenge of the Great Depression with the creation of citizen service programs like the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration. Millions of participants benefitted from paid employment and opportunities to develop skills while constructing national parks and public lands infrastructure and producing cultural works still enjoyed generations later. Through decades of bipartisan evolution, today's national service programs carry on that legacy.

National service programs, administered through the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), provide services that are in critical need during the COVID-19 response and recovery. Those programs, including AmeriCorps, the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, and Senior Corps, should be expanded to meet the needs of this moment. Those needs are as expansive as they are diverse: students requiring extra tutoring to recover from learning loss, food banks calling for more hands on deck to meet heightened demand, millions looking for new workforce opportunities, and others looking for a new pathway to afford higher education. National service supports flexible, locally driven responses to meet a wide range of community needs while providing an opportunity for participants to build their skills and earn student debt relief or tuition assistance.

Legislation:

- Fund national service positions for a three-year response and recovery period and grow them to the level authorized in CNCS's bipartisan, most recent reauthorization. Under the *CORPS Act*, the number of positions could grow from 75,000 to 150,000 the first year and then steadily to 250,000 by year three.
- Provide flexibilities for programs to grow and respond quickly to dynamic local recovery needs.
- Prioritize funding for activities directly related to our response and recovery, such as:
 - Public health services,
 - Programs that support economic opportunity,
 - Education support (including for adult learners), and
 - Services that combat nutrition insecurity.
- Prioritize expanding programs and services in rural and high poverty communities.
- Help organizations that have not previously hosted AmeriCorps members access the program.
- Ensure that individuals' financial resources do not limit participation by temporarily increasing the AmeriCorps living allowance to 175 percent of the federal poverty line and tying the value of the Segal Education Award to twice the value of the maximum Pell grant, harmonizing the treatment of both with other programs by making them nontaxable.
- Fund new online tools for Senior Corps to safely move to a teleservice model.
- Encourage participation by members of low-income and underrepresented communities and extend priority enrollment to Peace Corps, U.S. Fulbright, and AmeriCorps participants whose service or grants was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Invite participation by a diverse range of Americans by launching an awareness and outreach campaign on response service opportunities and supporting the Volunteer Generation Fund.

Endorsers: Voices for National Service, America's Service Commissions, The Corps Network, Catholic Volunteer Network, and more than 150 other organizations.

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