

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

Original cosponsors: *Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS)*, Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE), *Sen. Lindsay Graham (R-SC)*, *Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX)*, *Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL)*, *Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA)*, *Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME)*, *Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS)*, Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI), Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ), Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA), Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Sen. Angus King (I-ME).

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 benefited from paid 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), address critical local needs and fill gaps in social services. These programs, including AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, should be expanded during the COVID-19 response and recovery. To recover, we will need both meaningful employment opportunities and a significant expansion of human capital working to address community challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. National service presents a unique opportunity for a flexible, locally driven response to meet education, public health, employment and recovery necessities. The CORPS Act leans into the existing national service infrastructure that is already rooted in every state and enjoys bipartisan support from local and state leaders, mayors and governors.

The CORPS Act:

- Authorizes 600,000 AmeriCorps positions over a three-year response and recovery period. The number of AmeriCorps positions would grow from 75,000 to 150,000 in the first year, 200,000 in year two, and 250,000 in year three. In 2009, Congress authorized expanding AmeriCorps to 250,000 in Public Law 111-13 (42 USC 12511).
- Provides flexibilities to stabilize national service programs during the economic crisis and to allow them to grow and respond to dynamic local recovery needs.
- Prioritizes funding for activities directly related to COVID-19 response and recovery, such as:
  - Public health services, including support for isolation and quarantine activities,
  - Work that furthers the capacity of state, tribal and local health departments,
  - Emergency logistics, such as the setup of alternate care sites,
  - Services that support economic opportunity, workforce and reemployment services,
  - Work that furthers the capacity of nonprofit and community organizations to respond to the immediate needs of individuals affected by COVID-19,
  - Education support (including for adult learners),
  - Jobs for youth in conservation,
  - Services to address housing and food insecurity.
- Ensures that individuals' financial resources do not limit participation by increasing the AmeriCorps living allowance to 175 percent of the federal poverty line, tying the value of the Segal Education Award to twice the maximum Federal Pell Grant, and by making both benefits nontaxable.
- Encourages participation by a diverse range of Americans by launching an awareness and outreach campaign and extend priority enrollment to members from underserved populations, such economically disadvantaged or minority communities, those who have had contact with the juvenile justice system, Indians, veterans and those of diverse abilities, as well as Peace Corps,

U.S. Fulbright, and AmeriCorps participants whose service or grants was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Encourages programs to recruit applicants from the same metropolitan area where they attended secondary school or college and prioritizes expanding programs and services in rural and underserved areas.
- Establishes a pilot program allowing State Commissions to directly place AmeriCorps members in state national service programs - with priority given to programs that serve rural and underserved areas - during the COVID-19 response and recovery period,
- Creates a partnership between AmeriCorps and CDC inspired by FEMA Corps to provide for additional response surge capacity that could be deployed to specific areas as needed.
- Funds new online tools for Senior Corps to safely move to a teleservice model and expand Senior Corps eligibility.
- Expands the Volunteer Generation Fund.
- Authorizes \$16.6 billion in funding to be spent between FY20-FY23.