

# Committee on Education and Labor

Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, Senior Republican Member

# NEWS UPDATE

*Fiscally responsible reforms for students, workers and retirees.*

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**Opening Statement of Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (R-CA)  
Senior Republican Member, Education and Labor Committee  
Markup of H.R. 2857, the "Generations Invigorating Volunteering and Education Act"**

Mr. Chairman, let me begin by thanking you and your staff, along with Chairwoman McCarthy, for your work with Committee Republicans and our staff on this legislation. And I'd like to thank my Republican colleagues, Congressman Platts and Congressman Hoekstra, for their leadership on this issue. They have been champions of national service for years, and their stamp on this legislation is clearly evident.

Like many of my colleagues, particularly on this side of the aisle, I historically have had concerns about AmeriCorps and the other programs within the Corporation for National Service. Particularly during the 1990s, federal management of these programs was – at best – dismal. And for years, I joined many of my colleagues – led by Mr. Hoekstra – in seeking to establish performance measures to ensure that these national service programs are, in fact, meeting their goals.

Under the Bush Administration, it has become clearer that these programs are being held more accountable, and they've become more efficient as a result. For example, the Corporation received its seventh consecutive clean audit during Fiscal Year 2006. Likewise, the Corporation's leadership has instituted significant improvements in efficiency and quality, including streamlining the grants and application reporting processes, consolidating five field service centers into one, and automating education award payments, time and attendance, and travel.

In short, the recent management of this program has far surpassed its record of low accountability under the Clinton Administration, and for that reason in particular, it deserves our continued support.

Moreover, this program brings together our neighbors to serve one another – and thus, strengthen our nation. The Corporation's CEO David Eisner told Chairwoman McCarthy's and Congressman Platts' subcommittee earlier this year, "Across America, our communities are at their best, healthiest, and most effective when citizens partner to tackle our toughest problems: gangs, crime, drugs, homelessness, illiteracy, children aging out of foster care, elder care, drop outs, teen pregnancy, and the divide between haves and have-nots."

There is no one in this Committee room who could disagree with that assertion. And, while the delivery of these services does not occur exactly as all of us believe it should, the bottom line is the Corporation plays a key and increasingly effective role in – as President Bush would say – "rallying the armies of compassion."

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Mr. Chairman, before I conclude, I would be remiss if I did not point out one of a few concerns I do have about this legislation. Strangely enough, the bill would create a new National Office of Outreach and Recruitment, whose purpose it would be to increase public awareness of service opportunities and encourage more organizations to apply for grants. Indeed, outreach would be important if there was evidence to suggest that the Corporation was having trouble finding organizations to take its money. But that's not the case in the least, and I hope my colleagues would move to strike this unnecessary new office.

In spite of this, Mr. Chairman, I find the bill – as introduced – to be a balanced one and one worthy of our support, and I hope the amendments offered reflect the bipartisan nature of the process through which we've crafted this bill.

However, should this Committee overreach during today's amendment process by adding scores of new programs to further place at risk the Corporation's accountability to American taxpayers, I will be forced to reconsider my support, and I urge my colleagues to pay close attention on this matter as well.

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