

## Executive Summary

*Citizen service has always been a cornerstone of our democracy. Citizens have acted individually or through voluntary associations to found hospitals and libraries, start fire companies and civic improvement projects, and help cure diseases and advance rocketry that would fulfill our most distant dreams. Today, millions of Americans continue this tradition of service.*

Some observers, however, have indicated a decline in civic participation in recent decades. Robert Putnam, in his book *Bowling Alone*, highlights a decline in membership in service-oriented organizations such as churches, Rotary Clubs, and PTAs. Dr. Putnam recently noted that “in the aftermath of September’s tragedy, a window of opportunity has opened for a sort of civil renewal that occurs only once or twice a century. But though the crisis revealed and replenished the wells of solidarity in American communities, so far those wells remain untapped.”

Out of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Americans are looking for more ways to do good. We must do all we can to support them. While the vast majority of service in the United States will and should continue without the support of government, the President, leaders in the Congress, and government itself can play key roles in encouraging more Americans to serve their communities and country and in facilitating more meaningful full-time and part-time service opportunities. Since the State of the Union address, in which the President called on all Americans to give at least two years of service to their communities and country, interest in service opportunities is on the rise. In a little more than one month, applications to AmeriCorps programs at the Corporation for National and Community Service have increased by more than 50 percent and interest in Senior Corps programs at the Corporation has risen dramatically.

President Bush created the USA Freedom Corps to foster a culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility – to capture a unique moment in history and sustain an ethic of service for generations to come. The President has identified a number of actions to encourage and support those who want to serve their country. One such action is legislation to reform and enhance national and community service programs administered by the Corporation.

A Citizen Service Act will provide new service opportunities for: (a) 25,000 new AmeriCorps participants, leveraging at least 75,000 additional volunteers; (b) 100,000 new Senior Corps volunteers; and (c) an estimated 200,000-300,000 students in colleges and universities. The Administration calls on the Congress to authorize a \$290 million increase from last year’s budget – the full funding requested in the President’s Fiscal Year 2003 budget – to support these initiatives.