

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2008

The Honorable Dave Obey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and
Human Service, Education, and
Related Agencies
Room 2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jim Walsh
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and
Human Service, Education, and
Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Walsh:

We are writing in support of increased funding in fiscal year (FY) 2009 for the national service programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

As an independent federal agency, CNCS is responsible for some of the most accountable and effective programs that engage more than 3.8 million citizens of all ages in service to help address critical community needs. Uniting diverse Americans in service to their country, CNCS is helping to transform our nation's culture and develop a sense of civic commitment. National service is now an important part of our nation's infrastructure, helping community and faith-based organizations manage and deliver public aid efficiently with national service members as part of the delivery system. The Corporation for National and Community Service estimates that in 2006 the market value of the services that national service participants provided to the nation was between \$1.8 and \$3.9 billion.

CNCS has set strategic goals to reach by 2010, including:

- Increasing the annual number of Americans volunteering by 10 million, to 75 million;
- Increasing the number of college students engage in community service by 2.7 million, to 5 million;
- Increasing the number of Baby Boomer volunteers by 3.2 million, to 29 million;
- Engaging 3 million children in service; and
- Providing mentoring services to 5.5 million children and youth.

We are extremely disappointed that President's budget for the 5th consecutive year has again proposed to reduce support for this important work, recommending cuts to the Corporation for National and Community Service. Americans have stepped forward in record numbers to serve, but funding cuts have prevented national service programs from growing at a rate to meet demand and to meet the strategic goals of CNCS. We believe it is crucial that the Corporation for National and Community Service be given sufficient resources to ensure that national service participants are able to continue their essential work and that the community and faith-based organizations that have come to rely on them can continue to serve their communities. Because this is a smart investment that leverages federal dollars to create a greater capacity to meet community need, we urge you to provide a robust appropriation that will engage more Americans of all ages and backgrounds in this critical work.

AmeriCorps State and National Grants

AmeriCorps State and National is a network of local, state, and national service programs that connect more than 70,000 Americans each year in intensive service to address compelling community issues in education, public safety, health and human needs, and the environment. AmeriCorps members tutor and mentor, rehabilitate housing for low-income families, immunize children, respond to natural disasters, help the elderly maintain their independence, manage after-school programs for social and academic enrichment, and much more. Since FY04, federal funding to support AmeriCorps operations has been on a persistent decline.

When Congress created AmeriCorps, it required that private dollars be used to match federal funds. Each year, grantees leverage more than \$200 million from non-federal sources to support members and programs. This is a successful public-private partnership, and we are requesting that the Federal Government **reinvest in AmeriCorps State and National Grants, funding the program at its FY04 level of \$312 million.**

National Service Trust Fund

We are requesting **\$143 million for the National Service Trust Fund** - equal to the FY05 level - to enable the Corporation to enroll 75,000 members and maintain the traditional balance between full-time and part-time service activities.

When AmeriCorps was created, the post-service education benefit (\$4,725 for 1700 service hours) was equal to approximately 90 percent of the G.I. Bill education benefit and the cost of a year's study at a public university. Since that time, the cost of attending an institution of higher education has soared dramatically, outpacing the rate of inflation, increases in family income, and increases in state and federal financial aid. As students and their families are being priced out of the college market, the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award has remained static at \$4,725.

The education award should continue to be a valuable and compelling incentive for young people to serve and continue their education. While our recommended appropriation of \$143 million assumes there is no change, we urge Congress and the White House to revisit the value of the award so it can be more closely aligned with the current cost of a year of college study at a four year public institution.

National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)

After its heroic service in the immediate aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the NCCC continues to serve as a key program in the Gulf Coast's long-term recovery efforts. Trained in disaster management and relief, the 1,100 NCCC members can immediately respond to a natural disaster anywhere in the United States. Furthermore, the NCCC builds important leadership skills in its members. NCCC members serve in schools, non-profit organizations and on community projects. The NCCC is a critical element of our nation's disaster preparedness capacity. We request that you fund **NCCC at \$26.7 million**, which would allow the program to operate five campuses in a regional cluster alignment and serve communities in every state.

This year the President's budget cuts roughly \$16 million dollars from the NCCC funding, proposing the corporation raises \$10 million from private sources. In the year that private funding has been attempted, and attempted in full force, only \$1 million has been raised.

NCCC has proven its value in the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as NCCC members continue to put millions of dollars worth of work back into the gulf coast. In all NCCC has put more than \$26.4 million dollars back into the gulf coast alone, and countless more back into communities across the country.

Learn and Serve America

Since 1990, Learn and Serve America has engaged more than 15 million young people from kindergarten through college in service-learning. This teaching and learning strategy integrates curriculum with community service, enabling young people to apply academic lessons to solve the needs of their communities while improving grades, increasing attendance, and developing students' personal and social responsibility. While Learn and Serve America is a relatively small grant program, it has a huge impact: a four to one return on the federal investment of only \$28 per student. By making the program more flexible, the Corporation believes it can reach its goal of helping 50 percent of schools nationwide incorporate service-learning into their curricula. We urge you to restore **Learn and Serve America to \$46 million.**

Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)

We support providing **\$95.46 million for VISTA**, whose members spend at least one year of service addressing the needs of low-income communities, building the capacity of local organizations, and effectively bringing individuals and communities out of poverty.

Senior Corps

The Senior Corps is a network of programs, including the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program. These programs harness the experience and knowledge of Americans age 55 and older to meet a wide range of community needs. RSVP volunteers conduct safety patrols for local police departments, participate in environmental projects, provide educational services to children and adults, and respond to natural disasters, among other activities. Foster Grandparents serve one-on-one as tutors and mentors to young people with special needs. Senior Companions help homebound seniors and other adults maintain independence in their own homes.

We urge you to invest in these programs, which have a demonstrated track record of accomplishment, by providing **\$72 million for RSVP, \$115.9 million for Foster Grandparents and \$52 million for Senior Companions.**

Innovation, Demonstration and Assistance

We support increasing the appropriation for **Innovation, Demonstration and Assistance activities to \$31 million.** This funding supports merit-based competitive grants for supporting and expanding volunteerism, demonstration service projects, training and technical assistance activities to support grantees, and outreach to promote service in low-income, rural and disability communities.

State Commission Administrative Grants

State service commissions administer approximately three-fourths of the AmeriCorps State and National funds, and grant oversight is critical to ensure that the federal resources are being utilized effectively and efficiently. State Commission Administrative Grants – matched by Governors and state legislatures – are used to run grant competitions and monitor the performance of sub-grantees. The federal needs to be increased as the administration and oversight requirements have increased.


We recommend **\$15.6 million for administrative funding for the state service commission infrastructure**. A healthy state service commission infrastructure will continue to ensure strong, results-oriented programs.

We respectfully urge you to protect each of the relatively small investments that have such profound impacts on our communities and the nation. Under-funding national service sends precisely the wrong message to those Americans who want to serve their country.

Sincerely,



DORIS O. MATSUI
Member of Congress



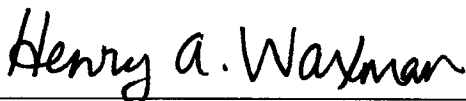
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Member of Congress



DAVID E. PRICE
Member of Congress



CHRISTOPHER SHAYS
Member of Congress



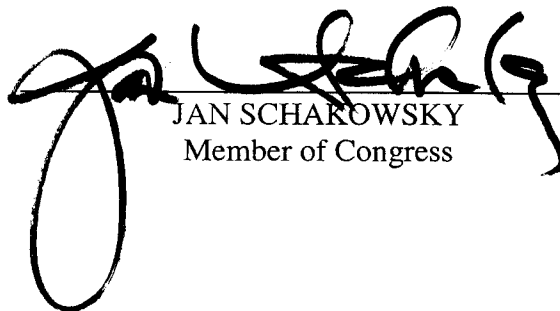
HENRY WAXMAN
Member of Congress



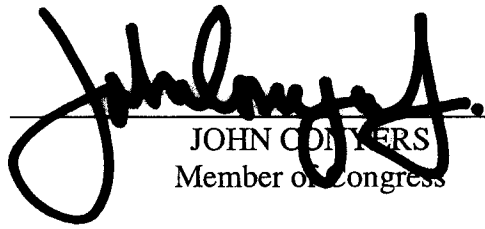
CAROLYN MCCARTHY
Member of Congress



NICK RAHALL
Member of Congress



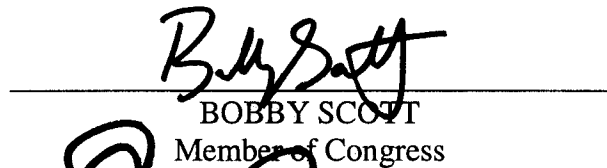
JAN SCHAROWSKY
Member of Congress



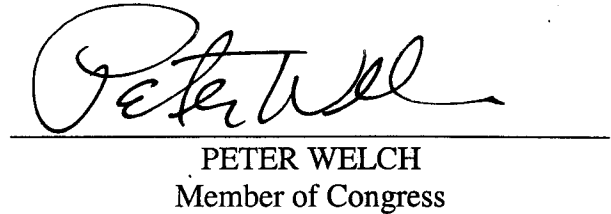
JOHN CONYERS
Member of Congress



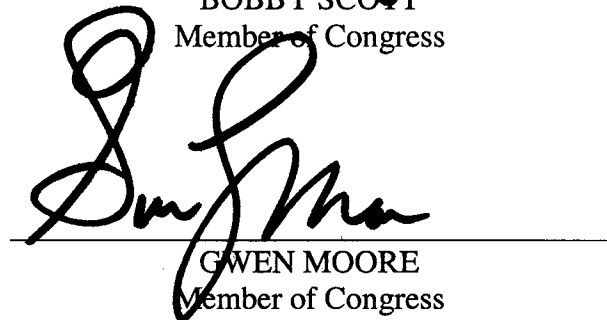
RAÚL GRIJALVA
Member of Congress



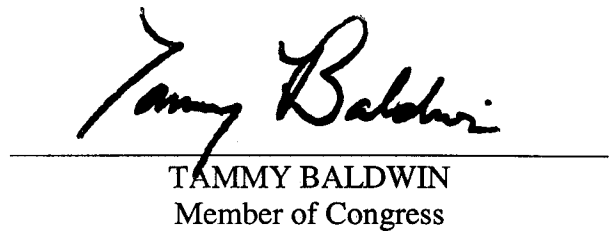
BOBBY SCOTT
Member of Congress



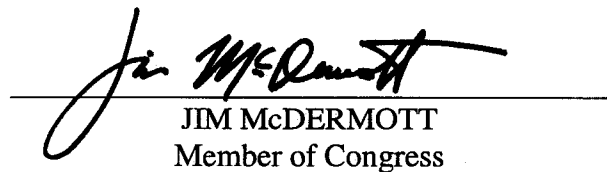
PETER WELCH
Member of Congress



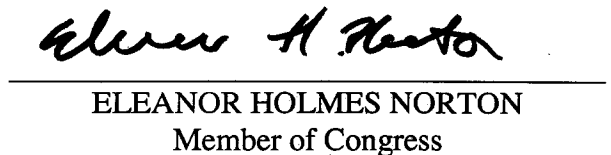
GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress



TAMMY BALDWIN
Member of Congress



JIM McDERMOTT
Member of Congress



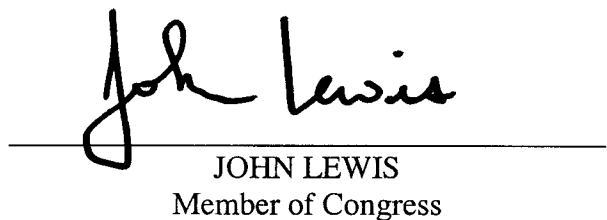
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Member of Congress



LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ
Member of Congress



HOWARD BERMAN
Member of Congress



JOHN LEWIS
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress

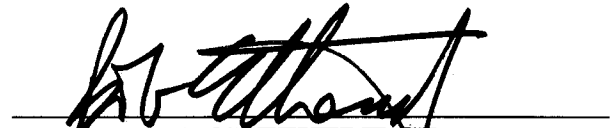

MAZIE HIRONO
Member of Congress



RICHARD NEAL
Member of Congress

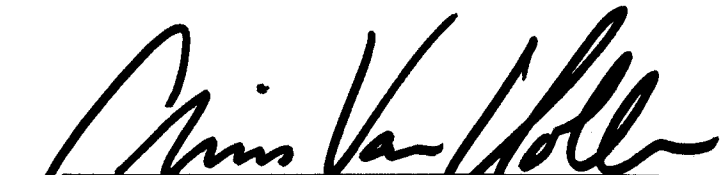

TOM ALLEN
Member of Congress


DENNIS MOORE
Member of Congress

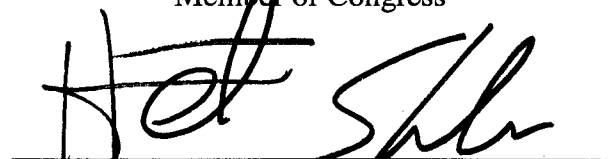

DENNIS KUCINICH
Member of Congress


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Member of Congress


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Member of Congress



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