

## Background

The reforms and principles proposed for a Citizen Service Act will make significant changes to the domestic service programs that are administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

### About the Corporation for National and Community Service

The Corporation for National and Community Service is an independent Federal agency created by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. Two statutes authorize most of the major federally funded volunteer and community service programs in America: the National and Community Service Act and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act. In general, the Corporation administers the programs authorized by these two statutes.

### Legislative History

The National and Community Service Act authorizes several programs administered by the Corporation including: AmeriCorps Grants, Learn and Serve America, the National Civilian Community Corps, and the Points of Light Foundation. The Domestic Volunteer Service Act authorizes the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program and the National Senior Volunteer Corps – known as Senior Corps. Authorization of funding for both statutes expired at the end of fiscal year 1996. Programs authorized by these statutes have continued to receive funding through appropriations legislation.

As part of his call to service, President Bush is asking the Congress to pass a Citizen Service Act that will encompass the reforms and principles set forth in this document. None of the Corporation's programs has had the benefit of a thorough review and discussion by the Congress for nearly a decade. To make our domestic service programs stronger and more effective in providing assistance to the communities they serve, the President urges the Congress to pass these principles and reforms in a Citizen Service Act.

### About the Programs

**AmeriCorps:** Created in 1993, the AmeriCorps grants program provides a network of community and volunteer service opportunities for participants who are 17 years or older. By statute, AmeriCorps programs and participants must address educational, public safety or environmental needs through services that provide a direct benefit to their communities. Major programs administered by AmeriCorps include *State and National grants* to support local nonprofit organizations across the country; the *National Civilian Community Corps*, a federally-operated 10 month residential program for young people 18-24; and *AmeriCorps\*VISTA*, a federally-operated program that works closely with faith-based and other community-based organizations to alleviate poverty.

**Senior Corps:** The National Senior Volunteer Corps program is comprised primarily of the *Foster Grandparent Program*, the *Senior Companion Program*, and the *Retired and Senior Volunteer Program*. These programs are designed to utilize the skills of senior citizens within their communities to meet priority needs.

**Learn and Serve America:** Learn and Serve America includes three service-learning programs that have been authorized since 1990: community based programs for school-age children, school-based programs for K-12 students, and higher education initiatives to involve college and university students in community service. Service-learning is a teaching method by which students or participants learn and develop skills and concepts through active participation in service activities that meet the needs of their communities.