

To: All Corporation-supported programs

From: Frank R. Trinity  
General Counsel

Date: June 27, 2003

Re: Restrictions on legislative lobbying and partisan politics.

Given that funding for AmeriCorps is a subject of intense public discussion, I am writing to remind those operating, and serving in, AmeriCorps programs of the rules concerning legislative lobbying and partisan politics.

Please continue to bear in mind the following rule: While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours towards an education award, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program, staff and members may not (1) attempt to influence legislation or (2) participate in, or endorse, political events or activities.

I want to be clear that individuals may exercise their First Amendment rights, including participating in the political process, on their own initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-AmeriCorps funds and resources. But in doing so, it is very important to avoid even a perception that AmeriCorps program staff or AmeriCorps members are engaging in political activities in those capacities. For example, wearing AmeriCorps gear while participating in a political event may result in an allegation that the AmeriCorps program is supporting political activities, even if that is not the case. As another example, while an organization may sign a public petition advocating some legislative action, it should identify itself by its organizational name rather than as an AmeriCorps program.

More detailed guidance on this subject is posted on the Corporation's website at: <http://www.nationalservice.org/about/ogc/lobbyingmemo.pdf>.