

**Remarks of the Honorable George Miller
Chairman, House Education and Labor Committee
Statement at Committee Markup of H.R. 1388
The GIVE Act
Wednesday, March 11, 2009**

Good morning.

Fifty years ago, President Kennedy inspired a generation of Americans to do what they could for their country and take part in their communities.

Today, that famous decree is more than just a great take away line from a famous Inauguration speech. It launched a powerful legacy of service and volunteerism for this country.

Just two weeks ago, in his first address to Congress, President Obama made service a key part of his agenda to revive our economy and our country.

He specifically called on Congress, as one of our next major actions, to pass bipartisan legislation to “encourage a renewed spirit of national service for this and future generations.”

At a hearing we held the day after his speech, this committee heard about the many ways that service and volunteerism can meet public needs that intensify in tough economic times, including improving student achievement in low-income schools, providing seniors with help living independently, supporting the veterans who have served our country during times of war and times of peace, increasing our energy-efficiency and much more.

The legislation we will consider today answers his call. It will help make Americans a part of the solution to get our country through this economic crisis.

Among other things, the GIVE Act will help students through tutoring and dropout prevention, it will prepare our current and future workers for green and other 21st century jobs, it will help us build a green economy, and it will give older Americans who have either lost jobs or need additional post-career employment the chance to serve.

It will update our nation's bedrock service programs – which haven't been reauthorized in 15 years – to meet the needs of this new economy and our communities.

For starters, the Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education Act will more than triple the number of AmeriCorps volunteers from the current 75,000 to 250,000.

And many of these volunteers will be eligible to receive an education award which will be increased to \$5,350 for next year and can be used to pay for college.

Our bill will link this award to match future boosts in the Pell Grant scholarship so that it keeps up with rising college costs.

The GIVE Act will create a new national Call to Service campaign to encourage all Americans to get involved in service and would make September 11th a National Day of Service and Remembrance.

The bill will provide new incentives for middle and high school students to engage in service. It will create a new Summer of Service program for middle and high school students, and reward them with a \$500 education award to help pay for college.

It says to our children: If you get involved in making a difference in your community in middle school or in high school, we'll help you get a good college education. That's an investment we can be proud of – and that will yield big payoffs down the line.

It will also expand the focus of the National Civilian Community Corps a program designed to help with infrastructure improvement, environmental and energy conversation, and urban and rural development, in addition to disaster relief.

To keep America competitive, the GIVE Act will also recruit scientists and engineers in to service.

And this bill will establish new fellowships to engage social entrepreneurs, Baby Boomers and retirees, the private sector and Americans of all ages in service.

I think all the members of this committee remember a remarkable young man, James Harris, who testified at our hearing a few weeks ago. Three years ago James was a high school student in Kansas City, whose plans didn't include college.

James participated in Usher's Camp New Look, which gave him with his first opportunity to volunteer as well as mentoring and leadership skills. It changed his life. Today, James is a business administration and entrepreneurship major in college. He now wants to get into the business side of the music industry.

I believe this legislation has the incredible power to change many more young Americans like James.

Now more than ever, we need this bill to help turn our country around and reinvigorate the American spirit.

I would like to thank Congresswoman McCarthy for her continued work and dedication on this legislation.

I would also like to thank Congressman McKeon and his staff for their time and energy.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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