

**STATEMENT OF HON. GEORGE MILLER
FOR HOUSE MARK-UP ON REAUTHORIZATION
OF NATIONAL SERVICE**

*H.R. 2857: The GIVE Act: Generations Invigorating
Volunteerism and Education*

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27, 2007

The bill before us today is H.R. 2857, the reauthorization of national service.

I want to thank Congresswoman McCarthy, Congressman Platts and McKeon for working on this bill and bringing it to the Committee. Its been nearly fifteen years since this committee last reauthorized some of these programs and I appreciate their work and commitment to reengaging young people and adults in national and community service.

The benefits of volunteerism and service are proven and measurable.

Since 1994, 500,000 Americans of all ages and backgrounds have participated in the **AmeriCorps** program. AmeriCorps has become a successful model of public and private partnership. Last year, the AmeriCorps program leveraged more than \$200 million in matching funds, helped mobilize more than 1.4 million volunteers and worked along with 2,000 small and large faith-based and community based organizations across the country.

The **VISTA** program engages 6,000 full-time members each year to fight poverty by creating businesses, expanding access to technology, recruiting literacy volunteers, and strengthening local anti-poverty groups.

Senior Corps taps the skills, talents, and experience of nearly half a million older Americans a year to help meet a wide range of community challenges through three programs--the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, the Foster Grandparent Program and the Senior Companion Program. Senior Corps volunteers mentor children of prisoners, provide independent living services to seniors, assist victims of natural disasters, improve the environment, and mobilize other volunteers.

Learn and Serve America makes community service a part of American education. The program promotes service-learning in schools, colleges, and community organizations to build youth service and civic engagement. Since 1994, 14 million young people ages five to 25 have donated their time to their communities through Learn and Serve programs.

The GIVE Act strengthens these programs so that they can continue their mission and expand their reach into more hard-to-serve communities. The bill starts us on the path to increasing the number of AmeriCorps members from 75,000 to 100,000 by 2012 with a focus on engaging low-income, disadvantaged and at-risk youth. We also increase the education award to participants from \$4,725 to \$5,225

by 2012 to reward them for their service and help them pay for college

This bill also recognizes that the earlier we introduce young people to the idea of service, the less likely it is that they will participate in risky behaviors and it improves their performance in school. The GIVE Act addresses this need by creating a new **Summer of Service** initiative that will offer young people from middle school through high school the opportunity to spend a summer in service to their community while earning \$500 that can be used for college or for college preparation.

Young people have shown themselves time and time again to respond to the call of service when they are asked. This was particularly true after Katrina hit the Gulf Coast Communities. Thousands of young people traveled to New Orleans, Mississippi and Texas during that time and the Americorp program played a strong role.

Many of these young people were Americorps alumni.

Americorps alumni are spread out across the country and remain a critical resource in their communities. The GIVE ACT creates an **Alumni Reserves Network** aimed at tapping into the skills and experience of service alumni with a particular focus on assisting during times of natural and emergency disaster.

Many of our communities needs' are being met through the hard work of volunteers. The service programs and new

initiatives that I have outlined will help to address some of our toughest problems – from poverty to natural disasters – and help improve the lives of millions of our most vulnerable citizens.

Again, I want to thank Congresswoman McCarthy, Congressman Platts and McKeon for their hard work on this bill and I yield to the Senior Republican Member for his statement.