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Serve America

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SUMMARY OF NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE TRUST ACT

SEPTEMBER 8, 1993

The national service initiative is designed to address the nation's problems by mobilizing Americans of every background, but particularly young people, in service to our communities and country. The programs support service extending from our youngest elementary students to our oldest citizens, and will fund service ranging from part-time volunteer activities to full-time public service with educational awards. The National and Community Service Trust Act, which builds on the programs of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, will also:

- Extend and improve programs funded under the National and Community Service Act of 1990 that enhance elementary and secondary education through community service in schools, support after-school and summer programs for school-age youth, and fund service programs on college campuses.
- Support the Civilian Community Corps in providing service opportunities in areas adversely affected by defense cutbacks.
- Support the Points of Light Foundation's efforts to promote volunteerism.
- Extend and improve the VISTA and Older American Volunteer Programs authorized by the Domestic Volunteer Service Act.
- Accelerate implementation of the Stafford Loan Forgiveness program.

NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE TRUST ACT OF 1993

Serve America

The legislation extends and expands the existing Serve America program which supports school based service learning for school-age youth and Higher Education Innovative Projects for Community Service. These programs support non-stipended service in schools or community-based agencies. The service in such programs is integrated into educational experiences or classes.

School-Based Service-Learning Program

Program Goals

- To build a foundation for service among the nation's youth, inspiring them to serve and instilling in them the values and desire to serve effectively after graduation.
- To create opportunities for all American children to serve our country.

Types of Programs

- Programs may be partnerships of local education agencies and community-based organizations.
- Local educational agencies may receive planning grants to hire service-learning coordinators.

Funding

- Approximately \$29 million (63.75% of the funding for the Serve America subtitle) would be authorized to be appropriated in fiscal year 1994 for school-based service learning programs.

Types of Funding

- School-based programs will be eligible for funding through state educational agencies, partly based on formula and partly through competition.

- State educational agencies must develop state plans that indicate programs to be funded and detail 3-year strategies for service-learning in their states. The Corporation must approve state plans.
- Programs may receive one-year planning grants for school-based programs. Sub-granting to experienced institutions for school-based programs will also be available.
- All local programs will be required to provide matching funds equal to at least 10 percent of total program costs in the first year, increasing to 50 percent in the fourth year. Local programs may utilize other federal education funds to meet the matching requirement.

Training and Technical Assistance

- Clearinghouses will be expanded to enable them to disseminate information and curriculum materials, train teachers, service sponsors and participants, and provide needs assessments and technical assistance.
- States will also receive additional resources to train and educate state educational personnel.

Community-Based Program for School-Age Youth

- Community-based organizations working with school-age youth may receive grants from the State Commission for programs to involve such youth in community service.
- National non-profit organizations may apply to the Corporation to make sub-grants or to run multi-state community-service programs for school-age youth.

Funding

- Approximately \$5 million (11.25% of the funding for the Serve America subtitle) would be authorized to be appropriated in fiscal year 1994 for community-based service learning programs.

Higher Education Innovative Projects

- Higher education institutions, consortia of such institutions, or partnerships of higher education institutions and non-profit institutions may receive grants from the Corporation for student community-service programs or for programs to train teachers in service-learning methods.

- Funds may supplement College Work-Study funds being used for community service placements.

Funding

- Approximately \$11 million (25% of the funding for the Serve America subtitle) would be authorized to be appropriated in fiscal year 1994 for higher education service learning programs.

National Service Trust Program

Focus of Service

- This program is designed to address unmet educational, environmental, human, or public safety needs. National priorities will be established within these areas.
- National service must improve the life of the participants, through citizenship education and training.
- Participants may not displace or duplicate the functions of existing workers.

Allocation of Funds

- States submitting plans approved by the Corporation will receive one third of funds according to a population-based formula and *at least* one-third on a competitive basis.
- The remaining one-third maximum will be awarded directly by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Programs eligible for direct funding include federal programs, national non-profit organizations operating multi-state programs or competitive sub-grant programs, national service initiatives meeting priority needs, proposals to replicate successful programs in more than one state, professional corps, and innovative national service programs.

Programs

Goals

- The Corporation will establish measurable goals to assess the impact of the

service on the community and on participants. Programs will also develop their own goals.

Eligibility

- Programs eligible for national service funding include community corps, youth corps, programs that train and place service-learning coordinators in schools or team leaders in corps programs, specialized service programs focusing on a specific community need, individual placement programs, campus-based service programs, inter-generational programs, national service entrepreneurship programs, professional corps, YouthBuild programs, safe-school programs, programs to fight hunger, and current national service demonstration programs.
- Programs may be operated by non-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, local governments, school districts, states, or federal agencies.
- Programs may not provide direct benefits to for-profit businesses, labor unions, or partisan political organizations, or use program assistance for certain religious activities. Programs must also comply with restrictions on political activity under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Selection

- Selection criteria include quality (based on criteria developed in consultation with experts in the field), innovation, sustainability, and replicability of programs.
- Other criteria include past experience and management skills in program leadership, the extent to which proposals build on existing programs, and the level of recruitment from communities served and those communities' involvement in program design, leadership and operation.
- Programs serving communities of greatest need will receive special priority. These include communities that are economically disadvantaged, environmentally distressed, adversely affected by reductions in defense spending, adversely affected by Federal land management practices, experiencing a substantial reduction of population and having a high percent age of economically disadvantaged older adults, or experiencing high unemployment. Fifty percent of assistance will be distributed to these areas, with a priority for programs recruiting participants from such areas.

Funding

- All participants will receive educational awards.

- The legislative authorizes the new program for a period of 3 years. Funding is authorized at \$300 million in fiscal year 1994, \$500 million in 1995, and \$700 million in 1996. The \$300 million in 1994 will build on the pilot programs funded over the last 3 years through the Commission on National and Community Service. The program will start at a size of 20,000 participants in the first year, and is projected to expand with increased funding levels to include at least 100,000 participants over the three years.
- One-year planning grants will be available for program development. To support national service participants, three-year renewable grants will be available for program expansion or replication.
- Administrative costs will be limited to five percent of all grants other than planning grants.
- Programs must provide matching funds equal to 15 percent of the stipend and health care benefits in cash and 25 percent of other program costs receiving federal support. The 25 percent match may be in cash or in kind from any source other than programs funded under the National and Community Service or Domestic Volunteer Service Acts.
- Federal funds must supplement, not supplant, state and local funds.

Participants

Eligibility

- Individuals may serve before, during, or after post-secondary education.
- In general, participants may be age 17 or older. Youth corps participants may be age 16 or older.
- Participants must be high school graduates or in most cases agree to achieve their high school "GED" (graduation equivalency diploma).

Selection

- Participants will be recruited and selected on a nondiscriminatory basis and without regard to political affiliation by local programs.
- A national and state recruitment system will help interested individuals obtain placements in local programs. Information about available positions will be widely disseminated through high schools, colleges, and other placement offices.

Recruitment efforts must pay special attention to the needs of disadvantaged youths. A special leadership corps may be recruited, trained, and placed to assist in the development of new national service programs.

Term of Service

- To earn an educational award, a participant in a designated program must complete one year of full-time service or two years of part-time service (three years of part-time service in the case of students). The term of service is 1700 hours for full-time service and 900 hours for part-time service (with a correspondingly smaller award). An individual may serve up to two terms and earn up to two educational awards. The Corporation has authority to develop provisions to offer smaller awards for shorter periods of service.

Educational Awards

- Educational awards of \$4,725 will be earned for a term of service. Educational awards may be used to repay loans for higher education or to pay for higher education or job training.
- Educational awards will be federally funded and deposited into a national service trust on behalf of all participants accepted into the program. Organizations and individuals may donate funds to support national service participants in the donor's community.
- Payments will be made directly to qualified post-secondary educational institutions, including two- and four-year colleges, training programs, and graduate or professional programs.
- In the case of participants with outstanding loan obligations for qualified educational activities, awards will be paid directly to lenders.
- Awards must be used within seven years of completion of a term of service.

Stipends

- Programs will set stipends within program guidelines. Programs must provide stipends no less than the amount received by VISTA volunteers and no greater than twice that amount. Federal support will be limited to a match of 85 percent of the VISTA allowance, with programs paying any stipend above that level.

- In the limited case of designated professional corps in areas of greatest need, such as teaching and public safety in underserved areas, participants may be paid a salary in excess of the guidelines and receive an educational award. However, no federal support will be available for this salary, and professional corps will be selected on a case-by-case basis directly by the Corporation.

Health and Child Care

- All participants without access to health insurance will receive health coverage. Federal dollars will pay up to 85 percent of the cost of these benefits.
- Full-time participants will receive child care assistance, if they demonstrate financial need.

Studies

- Specific studies are required to be undertaken by the Corporation, and the results must be reported to Congress before reauthorization. Specific issues to be studied are: the importance of diversity in service programs, the role of post-service educational benefits in attracting national service participants, and ways to integrate the structure of ACTION and the Commission on National and Community Service into the Corporation. These studies will make the program stronger by testing basic concepts of national service.

Organization

Corporation for National and Community Service

Structure

- The national service programs will be administered by a Corporation for National and Community Service, created by combining two existing independent federal agencies, the Commission on National and Community Service and ACTION.
- The Corporation will be responsible for administering all programs authorized under the National and Community Service Act and Domestic Volunteer Service Act, including VISTA and the Older American Volunteer Programs. The Corporation will also fund training and technical assistance, clearinghouses, and other activities.
- In order to build private and non-government support, the Corporation may

solicit and accept private funds.

- The Corporation will have a fifteen-member bipartisan citizen Board of Directors, whose members will serve for staggered 5-year terms.
- The Corporation includes provisions as strict as those of any other government agency to protect against financial mismanagement, ensure effective audits of operations, and require accountability for grants. A business plan to Congress is also required which sets forth the Corporation's plans to provide for thorough investigative functions and efficient Corporation staffing and organization before any grant funds are distributed.

State Commissions on National and Community Service

Structure

- In order to receive a grant, each state must establish a Commission on National and Community Service or comparable entity. Many states have established such entities under the National and Community Service Act of 1990.
- Commissions will have 15 to 25 citizen or expert members appointed by the governors on a bipartisan basis.
- A representative of the Corporation will sit on each Commission as an ex officio, non-voting member and act as a liaison between the Commission and the Corporation.
- State Commissions will be responsible for states' strategic plans, state applications to the Corporation for funding of programs in their state, assistance for health and child care, state recruiting and information systems, grant administration, and projects and training methods. State Commissions may not operate programs, but may fund state agencies that do.
- State Commissions must allocate at least 60 percent of their funds to non-state entities.

Points of Light Foundation

The Act provides for funding for the Points of Light Foundation for fiscal years 1994 through 1996. Funding will continue efforts to distribute information about successful service projects, to encourage Americans to volunteer in service activities, and to identify leaders who exemplify the commitment to serve others.

Domestic Volunteer Service Act Reauthorization

The legislation extends and expands VISTA and the Older American Volunteer Programs authorized by the Domestic Volunteer Service Act. Following a transition period, these programs will be administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

VISTA

- The Act extends the authority for the VISTA program and increases the number of VISTA volunteers.
- It authorizes a new VISTA Summer Associate program.
- It authorizes a University Year for the VISTA program to encourage student volunteer efforts to address the needs of low-income communities.
- It removes restrictions limiting the flexibility to manage VISTA, while reaffirming a commitment to recruit a diverse group of VISTA volunteers including young and older adults.
- It authorizes an increase in post-service stipends of \$30 for each month of service. Such stipends are not available if a VISTA volunteer accepts an educational award under the new National Service Trust.
- It continues support for the VISTA Literacy Corps.

Special Volunteer Programs

- The Act provides broader authority under the Special Volunteer Programs to support demonstrations and innovations, technical assistance, and other entrepreneurial activities. It eliminates specific authority for student community service and drug programs, which are covered under the broader demonstration authority and under the National and Community Service Act.

Older American Volunteer Programs

- The Act renames the Older American Volunteer Program as the National Senior Volunteer Corps and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program as the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program.

- It lowers the eligibility age for participation in the program to 55, with priority for those age 60 and older.
- It clarifies that foster grandparents may work with children with special and exceptional needs in Head Start programs, schools, and day care centers.
- It provides a new demonstration authority to strengthen older American volunteer programs.
- It eliminates restrictions that limit the flexibility to administer the program.
- It increases the stipend for low-income foster grandparents and senior companions once over the next five years to account for inflation.

Administration

- The Act encourages cooperation between ACTION and other federal agencies where ACTION volunteers can help further the purposes of other federal programs.
- It provides a technical amendment to restore the crediting of VISTA and Peace Corps service for federal pensions.

AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

	Fiscal Year (\$ million)		
	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>
Serve-America	45	such sums	such sums
National Service Trust	300	500	700
Administration	40	60	70
Civilian Conservation Corps	--	such sums	such sums
Points of Light Foundation	5	5	5
<u>Former ACTION Programs</u>			
VISTA	56	such sums	such sums
VISTA Literacy Corps	5.6	such sums	such sums
Special Volunteer Programs	such sums	such sums	such sums
Literacy Challenge Grants	such sums	such sums	such sums
Retired and Senior Volunteer Program	45	such sums	such sums
Foster Grandparents Program	85	such sums	such sums
Senior Companion Program	40	such sums	such sums