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President Signs National Service Bill

Corporation for National and Community Service

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President Clinton and youth corps members gather on the South Lawn of the White House for the signing of national service legislation.

AmeriCorps

President Signs National Service Bill

WASHINGTON, Sept. 21 -- Before an enthusiastic crowd of service, education, and congressional leaders, President Clinton signed into law the National and Community Service Trust Act to engage Americans in meeting critical needs through direct community-based service.

Promising that national service will "strengthen the cords that bind us together as a people," the President created AmeriCorps, a new program which will allow in its first year 20,000 young people to earn education benefits in exchange for grass-roots community service. With the enactment of this legislation, the nation will have the opportunity to marshal its best resources—Americans of all ages and backgrounds—to meet the challenge of rebuilding America through service.

The national service initiative was launched in the President's Inaugural Address, when he challenged "a new generation of young Americans to a season of service." In March, on the anniversary of the founding of the Peace Corps, the President unveiled his plan for national service and challenged the nation's youth to answer his call "to change America for ever and for the better." In May, the President proposed the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, legislation to strengthen and expand service and educational opportunities for all Americans. The President also initiated a pilot program, the Summer of Service, which engaged 1,500 young people in meeting the critical needs of children through sixteen programs across the country. By the end of the summer, the legislation creating the new Corporation for National and Community Service and AmeriCorps had passed with broad bipartisan support.

The new law focuses national service efforts on the most critical issues facing communities across the nation, bringing energy and commitment to address education, human, public safety, and environmental needs. The Act also creates a new administrative entity to coordinate AmeriCorps, as well as existing community service programs involving children, college students, adults, and seniors. In the best sense of reinventing government, the new Corporation for National and Community Service will feature a bipartisan board of directors, and an entrepreneurial, non-civil service management team and workforce.

At the bill signing, the President expressed his hope that "national service will remain throughout the life of America not a series of promises, but a series of challenges, across all the generations and all walks of life to help push to rebuild our troubled but wonderful land."

A Summary

The President's national service program, as set forth in the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, offers new resources for solving some of America's most intractable problems.

The Act establishes a definition of national service that is clear but broad. National service marshals the country's best resources—its citizens—to address the most urgent issues facing communities across the nation: education, human services, public safety, and the environment. It develops public-spirited, effective citizens by instilling an ethic of civic responsibility, and it does so without displacing or duplicating the functions of existing workers or volunteers. While the focus is on young adults, national service will include Americans of all ages and backgrounds, reuniting citizens and building national unity, community by community.

The centerpiece of the President's initiative is a new program offering opportunities for Americans to serve their country and earn education awards in return. Rather than creating a monolithic federal program, the initiative, known as AmeriCorps, builds upon the strong network of existing national service programs of not-for-profit organizations and states by supporting locally driven projects that meet high national standards of performance. AmeriCorps supports both full-time and part-time service. Participants receive a limited wage while serving and a post-service award of \$4,725 for a full year of service (half that amount for part-time service) to be used for past or present education expenses.

National service programs will be administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, which combines two existing independent federal agencies, the Commission on National and Community Service and ACTION. The Corporation will function as a clearinghouse of information and technical expertise for service initiatives nationwide and as a service "venture capitalist," providing funding on a competitive basis for state and national service programs. In addition to AmeriCorps, the Corporation will enhance service-learning programs in K-12 schools and higher education institutions and programs which utilize the talents of older Americans.

The National and Community Service Trust Act requires that every state create a bipartisan state commission for national service. The state commissions will be responsible for selecting most state programs. AmeriCorps programs can be run by not-for-profit organizations or partnerships, institutions of higher learning, local governments, school or police districts, states, Indian tribes, or federal agencies. Together with the Corporation, the state commissions will assist programs in recruiting participants, disseminating information about service opportunities, and providing technical assistance to communities organizing service programs.

Corporation funding encourages programs that address critical national priorities and the urgent needs of local communities. Of the AmeriCorps funds to be distributed by the Corporation this year, \$60 million will be allocated to states that submit plans approved by the Corporation by a population-based formula; at least \$60 million of the funds will be awarded to state programs on a competitive basis; \$1.8 million will be set aside for certain United States territories and possessions; \$1.8 will be set aside for Indian tribes; and the remaining \$57 million in funds will be allocated directly by the Corporation to a range of national, multi-state, and innovative national service programs.

The Corporation for National and Community Service was launched on October 1, 1993. The projected grants process will begin with the publication of draft regulations and applications in January 1994. Programs selected for funding will be announced in spring and summer of the same year. The first AmeriCorps participants will be serving in communities across the nation by June. In its first year of operation, the Corporation will enable up to 20,000 service participants to make an intense, long-term commitment to serving their country. In addition to the tens of thousands of Americans who will participate in AmeriCorps over the next three years, millions more—school-age youth and older,—will be contributing to their country by supporting national and community service.

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

MISSION STATEMENT

The Corporation for National and Community Service will engage Americans of all ages and backgrounds in community-based service. This service will address the nation's education, human, public safety, and environmental needs to achieve direct results. In doing so, the Corporation will foster civic responsibility, strengthen the cords that bind us together as a people, and provide educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service.

For more information write to:

The Corporation for National and Community Service, 1100 Vermont Ave. NW., Washington, D.C. 20525

A User's Guide

What is the Corporation for National and Community Service?

The Corporation is a new federal entity created by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. In conjunction with the White House Office of National Service, the Corporation combines the Commission on National and Community Service and ACTION, the federal domestic volunteer agency.

What kinds of national and community service programs will the Corporation support?

The programs of both the Commission and ACTION will be enhanced by the new Corporation. The Corporation will continue to support innovative programs in higher education, Serve-America and service-learning, the Civilian Community Corps and programs currently funded by ACTION, including VISTA and the National Senior Volunteer Corps. Current grantees, the youth corps and national service demonstration models, and subtitles of the National and Community Service Act, may continue to receive funding from the new Corporation. The Corporation will also administer AmeriCorps.

What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps is the President's initiative to achieve direct results in addressing the nation's critical education, human, public safety, and environmental needs at the community level. The program provides meaningful opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their country in organized efforts, fostering citizen responsibility, building community, and providing educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service.

What kinds of service does AmeriCorps support?

The Corporation will support programs that directly address needs in the areas of education, human, public safety, and the environment through service that provides a direct benefit to the community in which it is performed. National service programs must also have an impact on their participants, developing public-spirited, effective citizens with the skills needed for life-long contributions to solving the pressing problems facing our communities and our nation. National service participants may not displace existing workers nor duplicate their functions.

What kinds of organizations will be eligible to participate in AmeriCorps?

The National and Community Service Trust Act encourages grant applications from a wide range of programs — those that engage a handful of volunteers or multi-state networks of service organizations. Programs may be run by not-for-profit organizations, by local, state, and federal government entities, by Indian tribes, by institutions of higher education, by local school and police districts, and by partnerships among any of the above. Programs may not provide direct benefits to businesses, labor unions, or partisan political organizations. They may not use assistance to support religious activities or to engage participants in lobbying activities.

What types of programs are eligible for AmeriCorps grants?

Programs eligible for grants include a wide variety of community corps, youth corps, specialized service programs focusing on a specific community need, individual placement programs, campus-based service programs, programs that train and place service-learning coordinators in schools or team leaders in corps programs, intergenerational programs, national service entrepreneurship programs, professional corps, and the like.

What are the Corporation's criteria for selecting AmeriCorps programs?

The Corporation will develop and publish specific funding criteria in January 1994. Generally, national service programs must directly address the education, human, environment, and public safety needs of the community; must not duplicate or displace existing workers, must ensure that participants receive the proper training and support; and must show that they will apply measurable performance goals to their programs.

How will funds be allocated?

Of the funds that the Corporation allocates for AmeriCorps in fiscal year 1994, approximately \$60 million will be allocated to states that submit plans approved by the Corporation according to a population-based formula, and up to \$60 million will be awarded on a competitive basis. \$1.8 million will be set aside for Indian tribes, and another \$1.8 million will fund programs in United States territories and possessions. The remaining \$56.7 million in funds will be allocated directly by the Corporation. Additional funds will be used for training and technical assistance or competitively distributed as matching "challenge" grants.

What form will AmeriCorps grants take?

There will be non-renewable planning grants for a period of up to one year and renewable operating grants for up to three years.

What funds will the Corporation supply for AmeriCorps? What non-Corporation funds must programs supply?

Programs are encouraged to raise private funds. These matching requirements must be viewed as floors not ceilings. The Corporation will pay for 85 percent of stipends up to the VISTA subsistence allowance (roughly minimum wage), 85 percent of health care costs, 75 percent of other operating costs, 100 percent of a child care allowance, and the education award. Therefore, programs will pay at least 15 percent of stipends, 15 percent of health care, and 25 percent of other operating costs. Programs that pay stipends above the VISTA level must supply all funds in excess of that amount.

How will states be included in the AmeriCorps program?

Every state wishing to participate in national service initiatives must establish a commission on national and community service or a comparable entity for which the Corporation will provide partial funding. Governors will appoint members to the bipartisan commissions, which will include young people involved in service, educators, representatives of national service programs, older American volunteer programs, labor, and business as well as other experts in the field. States will draft three-year plans outlining their service proposals, which will be updated annually. During the first year of implementation, the governor may designate a transitional entity to perform the functions of the state commission for twenty-seven months after the date of the Act's enactment.

Will organizations receive AmeriCorps funds through a state commission or directly from the Corporation?

In general, local organizations will work with state commissions. National nonprofit, multi-state programs and professional corps programs may receive funds directly from the Corporation.

Who is eligible to serve in AmeriCorps?

Citizens and legal resident aliens aged seventeen years or older—sixteen in the case of programs targeted for out-of-school youths—may serve in AmeriCorps before, during, or after post-secondary education. In general, participants must be high school graduates or agree to achieve their GED prior to receiving education awards. While there is a focus on young people, the Corporation will encourage participation by Americans of all ages, genders, incomes, races, regions, and religions and include individuals with disabilities.

How will AmeriCorps participants be selected?

Programs approved by the Corporation or a state commission will select service participants on a non-discriminatory and non-political basis. To ensure that knowledge of programs is widely available, the Corporation will develop national and state recruiting information systems. There will also be a national pool from which programs may draw potential participants.

How will AmeriCorps participants be compensated?

Participants will receive a stipend during their term of service. Full-time participants not otherwise covered will receive basic health insurance and may receive a child care allowance if they need it to participate. For one year of full-time or two years of part-time service in a designated national service program, participants will also receive \$4,725 as an education award and repayment of any interest on student loans during their service. These awards may be used to pay for higher education or for vocational training. Awards must be used within seven years of completion of service. For those participants who have outstanding loan obligations for qualified educational activities, the post-service educational awards may be paid directly to the lender.

How long is a term of service under AmeriCorps?

The program requires a commitment intensive in hours but limited in years. Participants can perform a 1,700 hour full-time term over nine months to a year, or a part-time term of 900 hours over one to two years (or one to three years in the case of full-time college students).

When will the Corporation for National and Community Service begin processing applications for AmeriCorps programs?

The Corporation will be launched in October 1993. Regulations and appointments will be formalized during the remainder of the calendar year. The projected grant process will begin in early 1994, with programs selected for funding announced as early as the spring and summer of 1994. ♦

The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993

Program	1994 Funds*	Who May Apply?	Description of Program
ServeAmerica School-Based Service-Learning (Subtitle B1A)	\$25.5 Million	States may apply through their State Educational Agencies. 75% of these funds will be distributed by population and Chapter 1, ESEA, and 25% will be distributed competitively. 3% of these funds have been set aside for Indian tribes and U.S. Territories.	School age individuals will participate in service-learning projects, examples of which might include programs to expand state capacity, to provide teacher training, to develop service-learning curricula to establish effective outreach programs.
	\$4.5 Million	State Commissions, grant-making entities, and qualified organizations may compete for these funds.	Qualified organizations will implement, operate, expand, and replicate community-based programs providing meaningful service.
Higher Education Service-Learning (Subtitle B2)	\$10 Million	Higher education institutions may apply as may combinations of higher education institutions and partnerships between institutions of higher education and nonprofits.	University students, faculty, administration, staff and local residents will be employed in programs designed to engender a sense of social responsibility and meet community needs.
AmeriCorps Grants/VISTA/CCC States by Formula (Subtitle C)	\$60 Million	State Commissions and approved alternative state entities may apply for funding to make sub-grants to programs which can include public and private nonprofit organizations and other state agencies.	These programs address education, human, public safety and environmental needs. Such programs may include: (1) Community corps involving diverse teams of participants, (2) Full-time youth corps, (3) Training in service-learning, (4) Recruitment of individuals with specialized skills, (5) Individual placements, (6) Campus-based service, (7) Pre-professional training, (8) Professional corps, (9) Programs where economically disadvantaged youths and young adults work to meet housing and community needs in low income areas, (10) Entrepreneurial programs for gifted young adults, (11) Inter-generational programs, (12) After-school "safe places," (13) Programs focusing on rural community needs; and (14) Programs to alleviate hunger.
	\$60 Million		
	\$56.7 Million		
	National Competitive (Subtitle C)		
Indian Tribes & U. S. Territories (Subtitle C)	\$3.6 Million	Indian Tribes and U.S. Territories may apply.	
VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)	\$41.9 Million	Local sponsors may be state or local public agencies or private nonprofit organizations.	This is a full-time, year-long volunteer program for men and women 18 years of age or older from all backgrounds who commit themselves to increasing the capability of lower-income people to improve the condition of their own lives.
CCC (Civilian Community Corps)	\$30 Million	Headquartered in Washington, this is a new, federally managed residential program which will be located in sites across the country.	Federally operated model service corps which utilizes excess military capacity and personnel in the creation of a full-time or part-time service corps.
National Senior Volunteer Corps Foster Grandparent Program	\$66.1 Million	Community based private and public nonprofit organizations may apply for these funds.	This program pairs volunteers with children who have exceptional or special needs, including children with disabilities, children needing literacy assistance, teen parents and their dependents.
	\$34.4 Million		This program involves citizens age 55 and older in a variety of community service projects designed to best utilize their skills and experience.
	\$29.7 Million		Senior companions provide assistance to other adults, especially the frail elderly who are homebound. These services help the homebound achieve and maintain their highest possible level of independent living.

*Amounts shown are expected, estimated funding levels; final amounts will be determined through the appropriations process.

THE NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE TRUST ACT OF 1993

	Program	1994 Funds*	Who May Apply?	Description of Program
Other Grant Funds	The Points of Light Foundation	\$5 Million	Not a grant-making organization, the Foundation works through the media, businesses, government, not-for-profit organizations and Volunteer Centers across the country to serve as a catalyst for community service initiatives.	The Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit organization dedicated to mobilizing leaders from all sectors of society to motivate their members for community service. The Foundation provides tools and resources needed to engage the American public in community service.
	Training & Technical Assistance (Subtitle C)	\$12 Million	States, Indian tribes, labor organizations, and other national service organizations may apply.	Training and technical assistance will be made available either directly or through grants to current and prospective national service grantees.
	Disability Funds (Subtitle C)	\$3 Million	Programs which focus on the needs of individuals with disabilities may apply for these funds.	The Corporation must make grants to programs targeting individuals with disabilities.
	Disaster Relief Funds (Subtitle C)	\$10 Million	Disaster relief programs may apply.	Disaster funds may be offered when appropriate.
	Challenge Grants (Subtitle C)	\$10 Million	High quality national service programs may apply.	The Corporation may match privately-raised funds dollar for dollar for selected programs.
	Investment for Quality & Innovation (Subtitle H)	\$15 Million	Individuals, organizations conducting research or summer programs, planning coordination activities, and states or other entities receiving training and technical assistance may all apply for these funds.	The Corporation may support a wide variety of activities in a number of ways including research, individual training, summer programs, youth leadership programs, Presidential awards & military conversion.

*Amounts shown are expected, estimated funding levels; final amounts will be determined through the appropriations process.

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