

HR 4854, THE CITIZEN SERVICE ACT OF 2002

*Highlights of the Bill As Ordered Reported by
the House Committee on Education and the Workforce
June 12, 2002*

The Citizen Service Act of 2002 would reauthorize for 5 years the programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). **Specifically, the bill would:**

- Reauthorize and reform the national service laws, and authorize appropriations for fiscal years 2003 through 2007. The national service laws include: (1) the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (NCSA) which authorizes AmeriCorps and Learn & Serve America; and (2) the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (DVSA) which authorizes AmeriCorps*VISTA and Senior Corps (Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and Retired and Senior Volunteer Program or RSVP).

Service-Learning

- Increase the total authorization levels for service-learning programs as follows: FY 2003 -- \$55 million; FY 2004 -- \$58 million; FY 2005 -- \$61 million; FY 2006 -- \$65 million; and FY 2007 -- such sums as necessary. (Service-learning received \$43 million in appropriations in FY 2002.)
- Allocate the funds as follows: not more than 50% for school-based formula programs, not more than 25% for higher education, and not less than 25% for competitive grants at the federal level to improve the quality of school-based programs, community-based programs, and research and demonstration, including training.
- Continue authority for formula grants to state education agencies (SEAs), which would be given greater flexibility in use of funds and the ability to support a wider variety of eligible applicants.
- Authorize competitive grants at the federal level for high quality school-based, community-based, and demonstration programs, including training.
- Continue grants to support higher education. Higher education institutions applying for funding would have to demonstrate compliance with the community service requirements established for the *Federal Work Study program* under the Higher Education Act.

AmeriCorps

- Adjust the allocation of funding in the AmeriCorps grant program as follows: 45% for grants to states on a formula basis (*up from 33%*); at least 35% for state competitive grants; and up to 20% for grants to national organizations. (The new allocations would phase in, under a formula, as the overall appropriations increases.)
- Establish a floor on formula grants to states of \$500,000.

- Include requirements to contain costs by capping grant costs per individual member. (Cost containment is also achieved through current law provisions that authorize education-award-only programs, and part-time AmeriCorps members.)
- Authorize grants for the purpose of technology programs (E-Corps) and homeland security.
- Authorize a pilot program, with up to five percent of available funds, for the purpose of testing new approaches to increasing and diversifying opportunities for service.
- Authorize AmeriCorps members to engage in capacity-building activities including recruiting and managing volunteers; increasing the involvement of volunteers would be an explicit criterion to be considered in making awards under AmeriCorps as well as other national service programs.
- Transfer authority for the "education award program," originally carried out under a demonstration authority, to subtitle C of the statute—making it an ongoing program of AmeriCorps—with a maximum grant for operational support of \$600 per member.
- Set various requirements related to AmeriCorps tutoring programs, including: members must have high school diplomas or an equivalent.
- Revise the authority to provide challenge grants including: a) an increase to \$2 in private funds for each \$1 in Corporation funds after the third year (current law provides for \$1 in private funds); b) expansion of authority to include all national service programs, not just AmeriCorps; and c) authority to use local or state funds as matching funds when the CEO determines that private funds are not available at the local level.
- Modify grants to operate state commissions, including: increasing the minimum from \$125,000 to \$200,000; increasing the maximum grant from \$750,000 to \$1 million; placing the matching requirements on a sliding scale; and modifying the requirements related to the preparation of a national and community service plan for each state to include approval by the CEO, measurable goals and outcomes, and identification of administrative requirements that may be waived by the Corporation in order to facilitate a state's ability to carry out the plan.
- Increase Authorization of Appropriations for AmeriCorps grants for FY 2003 from \$240m to \$315m.

National Service Trust (which currently funds AmeriCorps Education Awards):

- Increase from \$4,725 to \$5,250 the amount of a full-time education award.
- Provide that funds in the Trust may be used to support service-based scholarships to: (1) high school students; and (2) seniors.
- Establish that an AmeriCorps member may receive the equivalent of two full-time education awards.

- Authorize the education award to be disbursed directly to individuals with disabilities to pay for education, training, or other work-related activities.
- Provide that the education award may be used for educational expenses at title IV institutions of higher education as well as to pay for attendance at educational institutions that meet the requirements of the Montgomery GI Bill.

AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)

(NCCC is a residential program for ages 18-24, that is based on a military model, and sends members in teams to help nonprofit groups provide disaster relief, build homes for low-income families, meet growing homeland security needs, and protect the environment.)

- Set a minimum of 18 years of age as the requirement for participation, except for summer programs.
- Authorize, for those enrolled in summer programs while in high school, a \$1,000 scholarship for post-secondary education.
- Require consultation with state commissions when conducting service activities within a state.
- Increase Authorization of Appropriations for NCCC FY 2003 from \$25m to \$30m.

AmeriCorps*Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)

- Maintain VISTA's unique role in national service related to fighting poverty and retain current law providing VISTAs with federal employee status for retirement, workers compensation and other purposes.
- Increase flexibility in operational programming authority for issues such as placement of participants, resolution of participant complaints, and funding of community service projects.
- Phase in over 4 years changes to the current law “24/7” requirement that would allow participants greater flexibility in their work schedule including the ability to use off-hours to take classes or engage in part-time employment to supplement their living allowance.
- Increase Authorization of Appropriations for AmeriCorps*VISTA for FY 2003 from \$85m to \$90m.

Senior Service

- Lower the age for eligibility to participate in the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs from 60 to 55.
- Raise the income eligibility guidelines under the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs from 125% to 200% of poverty. Currently 125% of poverty for a single person is \$11,075, and 200% is \$17,720 (higher for couples, and adjusted upward in Alaska and

Hawaii). Where local programs are unable to fill available stipended slots, up to 15% of the individuals enrolled in a local program may be above 200% of poverty. The prohibition on using federal funds to manage, train, and support over-income volunteers who want to participate in the program without receiving a stipend is removed. Seniors may self-certify income levels.

- Authorize a senior service scholarship for seniors who serve 500 hours in their communities in a year in tutoring and mentoring activities, as well as activities that meet a wide variety of community needs. Grants to support operations may not exceed \$600 per senior. The scholarship is to be \$1,000.
- Ensure the continued service of individuals currently serving in Retired and Senior Volunteer programs, Foster Grandparent programs, and Senior Companion programs.
- Increase Authorization of Appropriations for Senior Corps programs for FY 2003 as follows: increase RSVP from \$55m to \$59m; increase Foster Grandparents from \$107m to \$110m; increase Senior Companions from \$44.4m to \$46.6m.

Administrative Provisions

- Establish steps that the Corporation may take to assure that recipients of assistance under the national service laws are accountable for meeting performance measures.
- Authorize the Corporation to approve "fixed amount grants" under certain circumstances to ease the administrative burden upon programs.
- Require programs transporting minor children to receive prior parental permission, consistent with state law.
- Allow national service participants to engage in activities, including recruiting and managing volunteers, that build the capacity of community organizations to address community needs.
- Direct CNCS, when making funding decisions, to consider applicant organizations' ability to generate volunteers.
- Prohibit grantees from receiving assistance for the sole purpose of referring individuals to Federal or State assistance programs.
- Provide CNCS with certain administrative authorities, including: collecting and retaining certain fees; paying for certain meeting costs; setting grant periods; entering into personal services contracts for research, evaluation, and public awareness; and accepting donated services.

Other Provisions

- Expand flexibility in using funds to increase participation by individuals with disabilities in all categories of national service and increase the maximum amount available for this purpose from \$5 million to \$10 million.

- Authorize a grant to America's Promise: The Alliance for Youth for the purpose of supporting its activities related to mobilizing communities to ensure that young people become productive, responsible adults.
- Amend the authority to make grants to the Points of Light Foundation, including expanding the eligible uses of funds provided by CNCS to the Foundation to include subgrants to volunteer centers; and providing authority for deposits into an endowment.

Authorization of Appropriations

- Authorization levels are provided for fiscal year 2003 for all programs, and for 2003 through 2007 for Learn and Serve America; “such sums as necessary” are authorized for the outyears (fiscal years 2004 through 2007) for all other programs.

Period of Authorization

- Authorize the national service laws from fiscal year 2003 through fiscal year 2007.