



Improving Educational Opportunities & Outcomes for America's Children through National Service

The American government faces unprecedented challenges as it seeks to stimulate the economy, conserve energy, close the achievement gap, and more. Fortunately, Americans across the country want to pitch in to help solve these problems. Our nation is experiencing a resurgence of volunteerism and a renewed response to the call for national service. Last year, 61 million Americans of all ages and backgrounds volunteered in their communities. 3.9 million of them participated in national service programs, contributing a total of 228 million hours of service.

Now is the time for our country to harness the goodwill of an increasing number of Americans willing to serve. **The Serve America Act**, introduced in 2008, is a major legislative initiative to expand and improve service opportunities. If enacted, this legislation would recruit Americans of all ages to address some of the nation's most pressing problems, from the high school dropout crisis to the lack of health care in our neediest communities. Further, The Serve America Act would put much-needed resources into the nonprofit community and stimulate local economies. Through greater opportunities for national service, Americans can join together and overcome our nation's greatest obstacles.

What are the challenges?

- 7 million elementary school students cannot read at grade level (Voices for National Service, 2008).
- Nearly one-third of all high school students drop out before earning a degree (VNS, 2008).
- 14 million children lack a safe place to play after school (VNS, 2008).
- More than 750,000 Americans are homeless (VNS, 2008).
- 47 million Americans lack medical insurance (VNS, 2008).
- Concern regarding energy conservation and the environment is at an all time high (VNS, 2008).

How can Congress address these issues?

- **Pass The Serve America Act.** If enacted, this legislation would expand service opportunities and recruit Americans of all ages to address the nation's most urgent challenges, including education. The Serve America Act:
 - ♦ *Builds on the success of AmeriCorps to create a new, more robust Corps focused on areas of national need* by asking 175,000 more Americans to give a year of service to solve our nation's greatest challenges.
 - ♦ *Mobilizes community members to work together to close the educational achievement gap* by establishing an Education Corps. Corps members could work as instructors, mentors, and tutors in expanded learning time initiatives and afterschool programs.
 - ♦ *Supports innovation in the nonprofit sector* by creating a network of Community Solution Funds to allow groundbreaking nonprofits to replicate and expand initiatives that have successfully addressed community challenges.
- **Reauthorize and Sufficiently Fund National Service Programs.** Congress should reauthorize national service programs, including AmeriCorps, and reverse the slide in funding for these programs. Funding for existing and new national service programs must return at the very least to original levels to ensure successful implementation of the Serve America Act.

Why national service?

- Volunteerism is on the rise among Americans of all ages:
 - ♦ Since 1989, the volunteer rate among teens has nearly doubled, growing from 13.4% to 24.5% in 2007 (Corporation for National & Community Service, Nov. 2008).
 - ♦ The Baby Boomer volunteer rate has increased by more than 5 percentage points, from 24.1% in 1989 to 29.9 percent in 2007 (CNCS, Nov. 2008).
 - ♦ The volunteer rate for older adults (65+) increased by almost 7 percentage points between 1989 and 2007, from 16.9% to 23.8% CNCS, Nov. 2008).
- National service has a track record of meeting critical needs by engaging Americans to serve in communities across the country.
- There are hundreds of service and service-learning programs equipped and ready for expansion. These programs include Citizen Schools, City Year, Jumpstart, Habitat for Humanity International, Teach for America, YouthBuild USA, and many more.

How does Citizen Schools already help?

Citizen Schools is a leading national education initiative that uniquely mobilizes thousands of adult volunteers to help improve student achievement by teaching skill-building apprenticeships afterschool. These programs blend these real-world learning projects with rigorous academic and leadership development activities, preparing students in the middle grades for success in high school, college, the workforce, and civic life. Citizen Schools operates in 44 schools in California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, and Texas, serving an estimated 4,500 students and engaging 3,500 community volunteers.



For more information, contact Christin M. Driscoll, Executive Director of Policy and Communications, at christindriscoll@citizenschools.org. 308 Congress Street, Floor 5, Boston, MA 02210 • 617.695.2300 • in Washington, D.C. 703.524.2552

[www.citizenschools.org]