

AmeriCorps

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House Sends Landmark National Service Bill to President

Washington D.C. – Seventy-five years to the day after President Roosevelt signed the Civilian Conservation Corps into law, the House of Representatives today sent President Obama a sweeping expansion of national service that will engage millions of Americans in meeting national needs and solving local problems through volunteer service.

The House voted 275-149 this afternoon to accept the Senate amendments to H.R. 1388, the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. The Senate passed the bill last Thursday in a 79-19 vote and renamed the legislation after Senator Kennedy, a longtime champion of national service. The House action sends the bill to President Obama, who has said he will sign the measure.

“I congratulate the House on passing the bipartisan Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. This is legislation that will usher in a new era of service in America, and I look forward to signing it into law when I return to Washington,” said President Obama in a statement released today. “Because of this legislation, millions of Americans at all stages of their lives will have new opportunities to serve their country. I call on all Americans to stand up and do what they can to serve their communities, shape our history and enrich both their own lives and the lives of others across this country.”

The legislation would reauthorize and expand national service programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency created in 1993. The Corporation engages four million Americans in result-driven service each year, including 75,000 AmeriCorps members, 492,000 Senior Corps volunteers, 1.1 million Learn and Serve America students, and 2.2

million additional community volunteers mobilized and managed through the agency's programs.

Under the legislation, the Corporation would increase and enhance opportunities for Americans of all ages to serve by setting AmeriCorps on a path to increase from 75,000 to 250,000 positions each year, establishing a Summer of Service program, expanding eligibility for Senior Corps programs, and creating Silver Scholarships and Encore Fellowships for older Americans. It will strengthen America's civic infrastructure through the creation of grant programs to invest in social innovation, support volunteer mobilization, and build nonprofit capacity. The new law is also designed to strengthen the management, cost-effectiveness and accountability of programs by increasing flexibility, consolidating funding streams, and introducing more competition. For a bill summary, [click here](#).

"The broad bipartisan support for this legislation, and its remarkably swift journey through Congress, reflect the growing national consensus that service is a powerful response to the economic and social challenges facing America today," said Corporation Board Chair Alan Solomont. "Across the country, people are looking for ways to help their neighbors and their communities. This bill will help us channel more of that energy into meeting local and national needs. We are grateful to Representatives George Miller, Buck McKeon, Carolyn McCarthy, and Todd Platts for their outstanding leadership."

President Obama called for passage of national service legislation in his joint address to Congress on February 25, and the House and Senate responded with remarkable speed. Introduced on March 9, the GIVE Act (Generations Invigorating Volunteering and Education Act) passed the House on March 18, followed by Senate passage of its version of the bill on March 26, culminating in today's final vote. The fast action on the bill resulted from years of work on a bipartisan basis between the House Education and Labor Committee and the Senate HELP Committee, strong leadership from President Obama, and support from America's nonprofit and service sector.

"History has shown that in times of crisis, Americans turn to service and volunteering for healing, for rebuilding and for hope. The spirit and generosity of the American people is one of our nation's greatest assets," said U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee. "This legislation is just what we need, at this pivotal moment, to get our nation back on track."

“The American spirit is one of giving back – to our neighbors, our communities, and our nation. All across this country, citizens are devoting their time, skills, and resources to make our country a better place. And through this Act, we can nurture that spirit of selflessness, leveraging both individuals and organizations to achieve national goals,” said Representative McKeon, Ranking Member, House Education and Labor Committee.

“At this time of economic crisis, we need service and volunteering more than ever. We are grateful to the Congress and the President for moving this legislation that will allow us to grow national service in a responsible and effective way,” said Corporation Acting CEO Nicola Goren. Noting the tripling of AmeriCorps applications last month, Goren added, “Americans are a deeply compassionate people and are ready to step forward to serve at this time of growing need. This bill will make it possible for a new generation of citizen service to rise to the challenges of our difficult times.”

The Corporation for National and Community Service is a federal agency that improves lives, strengthens communities, and fosters civic engagement through service and volunteering. Each year, the Corporation engages four million Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service through its Senior Corps, AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America programs. For more information, visit <http://www.nationalservice.gov>.