

Overview

This paper synthesizes research done in conjunction with my summer fellowship at the Government Affairs Team at the Partnership for Public Service in Washington, D.C. I participated in a conference call on July 21 with the United Way Justice Team (sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service) who conducted me with surveys and research conducted by George from the research. I learned that not only is community service in the public sector a current economic challenge, but participation in organized community service has a direct link to a career in public service.

Morse Scholarship Project
Summer 2009
*"Connecting Community Service to
Careers in Public Service"*
Lydia Peele

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This paper summarizes research done in conjunction with my summer fellowship with the Government Affairs Team at the Partnership for Public Service in Washington, D.C. I participated in a conference call on July 21 with the "United We Serve" public affairs team (sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service), who connected me with surveys and research conducted by AmeriCorps. From this research, I learned that not only is community service on the rise despite current economic challenges, but participation in organized community service has a direct link to a career in public service.

Maria Hernandez
Summer 2011
Connecting Community Service to
Careers in Public Service
Lydia Fagan

Background – Serve America Act and AmeriCorps

"Service is a spark to rekindle the spirit of democracy in an age of uncertainty. When it is all said and done, it comes down to three simple questions: What is right? What is wrong? And what are we going to do about it?"

— President Bill Clinton, upon swearing in the first class of AmeriCorps members

The first class of AmeriCorps members in 1994 was 20,000 strong and impacted more than 1,000 communities. In July 2003, the number of members nearly doubled when President Bush signed the Strengthen AmeriCorps Program Act. The legislation was the product of extensive, cooperative discussions with the Administration and a sign of the strong bipartisan support for AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps and its programs are among the most recent chapters in our country's long history of encouraging and supporting civic engagement. Highlights of that history are shown on the National and Community Service Timeline.

(<http://www.americorps.gov/about/ac/history.asp>)

AmeriCorps members address critical needs in communities all across America.

They:

- Tutor and mentor disadvantaged youth
- Fight illiteracy
- Improve health services
- Build affordable housing
- Teach computer skills
- Clean parks and streams
- Manage or operate after-school programs
- Help communities respond to disasters
- Build organizational capacity

On April 21, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the H.R. 1388, the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. The Serve America Act reauthorizes and expands 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. (See press release titled, "Highlights of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act")

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/serveamerica/index.asp>

The bill had bipartisan support and was publicly supported by President Obama, who stated "H.R. 1388 couples expanded and improved

national service with the structural changes needed to support growth and produce excellent results for the participants and our Nation.” Further support included Sen. John Reed [D-RI], who expressed support on the Senate floor. His comments reflect that, “Participants in these programs are given an opportunity to learn as well as an opportunity to serve. In the act of serving their community, participants often make a difference in their own lives--developing their own knowledge, skills, character, and self esteem, and incorporating an ethic of civic responsibility for the rest of their lives.”

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen [D-NH] soon followed his lead by sharing that, “This bill could not come at a more critical time in our Nation's history. More and more people need help getting by in this tough economic climate, while more and more of even the most generous among us have less and less to contribute to charitable activities. That is what makes this legislation so special. It has nothing to do with status, with background, with privilege or circumstance. Every American is equal in their ability to give of themselves and their time. As Martin Luther King said so eloquently: Every American can be great because every American can serve--to paraphrase what he said a little bit. The Serve America Act encourages voluntarism at every stage of life—from students, to full-time workers, to senior citizens.”

http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/assets/sap_111/saphr1388r_20090317.pdf
<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/record.xpd?id=111-s20090325-18&bill=h111-1388>

However, the passage of this bill was not without debate.

Congressman Ron Paul stated in his formal opposition to HR 1388 that, “The idea that it is legitimate for the federal government to take money from one group of citizens and use that money to bribe other citizens into performing “national service” violates the basic moral principles of individual liberty that this country was founded upon.” He goes on to state that while the program is voluntary, the cost to the taxpayers is not (http://www.house.gov/list/speech/tx14_paul/natservoppose.shtml).

Further, both Kansas Senators Same Brownback and Pat Roberts voted against passage of the bill.

According to GOP.gov, the website of republicans in Congress:

Furthermore, some Members are concerned that AmeriCorps volunteers are currently employed (and recruited) by community organizations including Planned Parenthood. Members have expressed concern that federal funding

should not support "volunteers" to be paid to work for abortion providers and grant them further flexibility with their finances and resources (understanding that money is fungible). For a recent example of an AmeriCorps job opportunity at a Planned Parenthood, click here. These Members are also concerned that without the proper safeguards, opportunities for community service participants to engage in activities that many find inappropriate (i.e. ACORN, Planned Parenthood) could become more commonplace under the Obama Administration.

(<http://www.gop.gov/bill/111/1/hr1388>)

Ultimately, H.R. 1388 had 37 cosponsors and a final passing vote of 79 – 19 – 1. As of April 29, 2009 AmeriCorps applications had already risen by 240%.

According to an AmeriCorps press release:

AmeriCorps is experiencing a significant surge of applications. Last month, AmeriCorps received 17,038 online applications, nearly triple the 6,770 received in March 2008. In the past five months, AmeriCorps received 48,520 online applications, up 234 percent over the 14,532 that came in during the same five month period a year ago. Many volunteer centers and nonprofit groups are also reporting a "compassion boom" of increased numbers and volunteers.

Is volunteering in the United States increasing or decreasing?

Findings such as those released by AmeriCorps reflect a seemingly counter-intuitive shift in attitudes about community service. While our country is weathering severe financial strain, Americans are seizing the opportunity to help each other. This was specifically found by a Corporation for National and Community Service research study, *Volunteering in America*. Key findings include that “despite the challenges of a tough economic situation, the volunteering rate held steady between 2007 and 2008, while the number of volunteers slightly increased by about one million.” Also noted is that “as the economy slows and nonprofit organizations struggle to provide services on smaller budgets, volunteers become even more vital to the health of our nation’s communities. Between September 2008 and March 2009, more than a third of nonprofit organizations report increasing the number of volunteers in the coming year. Almost no nonprofit organizations are showing a decrease in their volunteer usage.” Other notable facts:

- Previous research indicates that a concurrent decrease in volunteering rates could occur during a time of economic recession, especially when there are decreases in home ownership and increases in unemployment rates.
- About 8.24 million young people ages 16-24 volunteered in 2008, over 441,000 more than in 2007. This increase in young adult volunteers makes up almost half of the overall increase in the number of volunteers nationally.
- The interest among young people in volunteering coincides with their reported increase in the belief that it is essential or very important to help other people in need. The Higher Education Research Institute studies the attitudes of first-year college students each year and reported that in 2008, 69.7 percent of students held this belief – the highest rate since 1970.
- The Midwest region of the U.S. has had the highest volunteer rate among U.S. regions for all adults, with a rate of 23.9 percent in 1989, and 30.2 percent in 2008
 - Kansas ranked 8th in state comparison for Volunteer Rate
 - Kansas City, MO ranked 5th in Large City volunteer rate comparison
 - Topeka, KS ranked 5th in mid-sized cities for volunteer rate

A longitudinal research report also conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service, “Volunteer Growth in America,” gives a historical view of volunteering through data collected in 1974, 1989, and 2002-2005 from the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a comprehensive and scientifically rigorous survey of 60,000 American households conducted by

the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Key findings included:

- Volunteering is at a 30-year high. The adult volunteering rate has increased by more than 32% since 1989. This growth has primarily been driven by older teenagers (ages 16-19), mid-life adults (ages 45-64) and older adults (65 years and over).
- Volunteering through an educational or youth service organization had the largest increase between 1989 and today, but the proportion of Americans volunteering through a religious organization decreased slightly between 1989 and today.
- Proposed reasons for the influx of volunteerism:
 - Recent events such as the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks may have been a catalyst for more Americans to make a contribution to the health and well being of the nation.
 - Other events such as Hurricane Ivan, the 2004 tsunami, the wildfires in the southwestern and western U.S., and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita may have also created an increased commitment to volunteering
 - There is an increased demand for volunteers from nonprofit organizations. A study of nonprofit volunteer management in 2003, sponsored by the Corporation and the UPS Foundation, indicates that 81 percent of nonprofit organizations in America utilize volunteers.
- Teenagers: enthusiasm for school-based service and service-learning; teenager's increased desire to serve their communities after September 11, 2001 attacks
- Mid-Life adults increase in volunteerism can be attributed to higher levels of education attainment and delays in marriage and childbearing
- Older adults volunteer rate is connected with generational changes, connections between health and volunteering and improved education and income levels.

Why is volunteering important?

As it turns out, AmeriCorps members are not only a group of people committed to serving the common good, but is an excellent pipeline to careers in public service. Since 1994, 540,000 individuals have served in AmeriCorps, most of whom dedicated at least one year to tackling some of the nations toughest problems, including illiteracy, homelessness, gang violence and drug abuse. What this report found was that these alumni continue to be highly civically engaged in their communities. 60% of AmeriCorps State and National alumni work in a nonprofit or governmental organization, and nearly half pursue careers in specific fields such as education, social work, public safety, government or military jobs. This is no small statistic as our nation will soon face an enormous shortage in mission-critical career talent due to the retiring workforce (see Partnership for Public Service "Where the Jobs Are" report).

The Still Serving report contains the following results:

- AmeriCorps alumni are more connected to their communities
- AmeriCorps alumni feel more empowered to work for the betterment of their community
- AmeriCorps is a pipeline for careers in public service
 - 46% of State and National members are employed in education, social work, public safety, arts, religion, government, or full-time military service compared to 33% of their comparison group
 - Overall, 60% of AmeriCorps alumni are employed in either government or nonprofit jobs
- Racial and ethnic minority alumni and alumni from disadvantaged circumstances are more likely to be employed in public service careers than their comparison group

Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development. Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni. Washington, DC 2008.

How can we encourage volunteering?

While volunteer rates are up, what is disheartening is that today, over one-third of volunteers drop out of service each year, and do not serve with any organizations the following year. The Corporation found that the best way to encourage new volunteers was through personal invitations. Over 27 million volunteers in 2008 stated they started serving after someone had asked them to. Many non-volunteers saw themselves as having a different lifestyle than that of a volunteer, often citing that volunteers are retired, without children, and with man abundance of leisure time. Also, poor management of volunteers turns people away, as well as the misconception that one does not have enough time to volunteer.

Recommendations to recruit new volunteers and maintain the current volunteer pool:

- Use current volunteer pool as key recruiters
- Integrate effective volunteer management practices
- Emphasize the positive aspects of the experience including
- Acquiring new skills, friends, and meaningful experiences
- Offer a variety of opportunities, both related to the task and time commitment
- Provide highlights on current volunteer opportunities that might also bring new volunteers
- Refer interested volunteers to partner organizations if the volunteer is not the right fit

Corporation for National & Community Service report – *Pathways to Service: Learning from the potential volunteers perspective*

**How can we encourage careers in public service?
My Summer Fellowship in Washington, D.C.**

Partnership for Public Service

Our Mission

The Partnership for Public Service works to revitalize our federal government by inspiring a new generation to serve and by transforming the way government works.

Our Vision

We envision a dynamic and innovative federal government that effectively serves the American people.

Our Guiding Principles

We believe that good government starts with good people.

We live by our name of Partnership – working with others whenever possible.

We exist not to do the job of government, but to help government do its job better.

We work to improve OUR government, not THE government, focusing on goals that transcend ideology and politics.

Government Affairs Team

The Government Affairs team represents the Partnership on Capitol Hill and before the executive branch. The Team advocates for legislation that will bring about policy changes and human capital reform, educates decision-makers on civil service issues and works to engage key policymakers in Partnership activities. The Government Affairs Fellow has the opportunity to learn about the legislative process by tracking current legislation, drafting correspondence for the Hill, attending congressional hearings, researching and writing memos on federal workforce issues and relevant legislation and participating in the planning and staffing of key Partnership events (e.g., the Service to America Medals and the Annual Summer Intern Event).

Overview of Responsibilities

Roosevelt Scholars Act of 2009

From my very first week, I was contacting university presidents and government affairs directors from across the nation to encourage them to support Roosevelt Scholars Act of 2009. This was done with phone calls, e-mails, and mailings. We went from having just over 100 signatures of support in June to more than 120 by mid August. Included in the new group was our very own Kansas State University President Kirk Schulz. In addition to updating statistics on tuition costs and student debt, I was also contacting national offices of various campus organizations such as Mortar Board Senior Honor Society to ask for support. When we received word that the Bill would get introduced soon, I began making phone calls and sending e-mails to members of Congress who were listed as sponsors on last years' legislation.

From www.ourpublicservice.org/roosevelt:

On July 31, 2009, Representatives David Price (D-NC) and Michael Castle (R-DE) introduced the bipartisan Roosevelt Scholars Act of 2009 (H.R.3510). The legislation would create a civilian ROTC program by offering graduate-level scholarships in mission-critical fields including science, engineering, public health, information technology, foreign languages and law, in exchange for a federal service commitment.

More than 120 leaders of colleges and universities, nonprofits, associations and good government organizations signed a letter of support, which is circulating on Capitol Hill. Hundreds more have signed an online petition.

Senator George Voinovich (R-OH) is planning to introduce the Roosevelt Scholars Act in the Senate, as well. The Senate bill will likely include undergraduate and graduate scholarships for civil service and will be similar to Senate Amendment #700 to the Serve America Act, which was filed this spring by Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), George Voinovich (R-OH) and Susan Collins (R-ME). The amendment did not come up for a vote due to pressure to move the Serve America Act quickly.

Latest Major Action: 7/31/2009 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the Committee on Education and Labor, and in addition to the Committees on Oversight and Government Reform, and Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

Government Affairs Newsletter, Press Releases, Letters of Support

An idea that had been circulating around the Government Affairs team was to create one document that would summarize the most pertinent governmental initiatives that the Partnership was supportive of. I started by researching other nonprofit governmental relations newsletters, and then took the best features to create our own. I conducted research for legislator and bill spotlights, and the newsletter was distributed electronically to key Capitol Hill contacts (see attached).

In addition to researching and tracking legislation, I drafted various press releases that were sent to media outlets, and letters of support that were sent directly to members of Congress. Further work this summer included:

- Public Health Workforce Development
 - Researched, analyzed, and compared Sen. Durbin and Rep. Matsui bills (S.1143 and H.R.2620) to overarching Health Care Bill, H.R.3200 and bill passed by Senate HELP committee
 - Wrote letter of support to Senator Durbin and Representative Matsue
- Drafted press release on behalf of CEO and President Max Stier in support of Paid Parental Leave
- Presidential Management Initiative Research
 - Transition funding breakdown – history of allocation, how much was spent, where the money went, etc.
- College Affordability Act Research
 - Wrote Public Service Loan Forgiveness and Income Based Repayment (IBR) Internal memos
- Wrote Homeland Security and Government Affairs Subcommittee Hearing Memo Workforce Subcommittee Hearing Memo
- Drafted “Dear Colleague” letter for Career and Internship Fair
- Attended Press Releases/Committee Markups/Hearings
 - Paid Parental Leave Press Conference hosted by Rep. Maloney (D-NY)
 - Representative Sarbanes’ Public Service Loan Forgiveness event at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore
 - Flexible Work Arrangements panel at the New America Foundation
 - Science & Technology Subcommittee Hearing - Females in STEM Fields
 - HR 2517 (Domestic Partner Benefits) hearing and markup
 - Full committee markup of H.R.3221, the "Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009."

Why my fellowship was relevant...

What I learned more than anything this summer was the intricate details of the legislative process. I experienced the amount of work it takes just to get a Bill introduced to the House of Representatives. I had never worked for a nonprofit before, and this was nothing short of a first-rate organization. The work environment was very positive, people worked as a team, the employees were engaged and motivated to succeed, and the president made team building a priority (we even had an employee BBQ and bowling outing). As the mission of the Partnership is two-fold – inspiring new talent to work for the federal government and transforming the leadership already in place – we were particularly interested in reaching out to college campuses. Some initiatives pertinent to my research interests included the “Call to Serve” network and the “Where the Jobs Are” report.

What does the Partnership do to help the federal government recruit?

Call to Serve Network

<http://ourpublicservice.org/OPS/programs/calltoserve/>

Many college students say that they are looking for opportunities to make a difference and view federal service as a way to accomplish that goal. Unfortunately, their knowledge of federal job opportunities is low. The Call to Serve initiative is designed to bridge the knowledge gap for students and their advisors.

Call to Serve is a joint effort of the Partnership and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to educate a new generation about the importance of a strong civil service, help re-establish links between federal agencies and campuses, and provide students with information about federal jobs.

The Call to Serve network consists of more than 670 schools and more than 75 federal agencies. Participating schools have signed a “Statement of Purpose” that commits them to educating their students about opportunities in the federal civil service. These schools:

- Appoint a campus coordinator to oversee education and outreach to their students about opportunities for public service in the federal government;
- Work with the Partnership, the Office of Personnel Management, and other federal agencies to ensure students are provided with information about federal jobs that is timely, understandable and relevant to young people;
- Sponsor campus events at which information about federal careers is made

available;

- Highlight alumni who are making important contributions as federal employees; and
- Speak about the importance of public and governmental service at appropriate occasions.

Participating agencies work effectively to facilitate recruitment and retention of younger members of the federal workforce and communicate with the campus coordinators in our network to provide guidance on how students can find information about and pursue jobs in federal service.

The Partnership offers support to agency and school coordinators in creating events, identifying speakers, gathering materials and providing other assistance throughout the year.

*See attached May 2009 Call to Serve eNews

Where the Jobs Are report

<http://data.wherethejobsare.org/wtja/home>

Designed to help a broad audience of job seekers, policy makers and agency leaders, Where the Jobs Are identifies nearly 273,000 mission-critical employment opportunities that will be available in the federal government from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2012.

These positions are not merely job slots to be filled. The federal government needs the best and brightest talent to work for them in order to be functional at its greatest capacity. We are in a critical need in the areas of medical and public health, security and protection, compliance and enforcement, legal, administration/program management.

Press release:

http://ourpublicservice.org/OPS/pressroom/releases/release_090903_wtja.shtml

Future policy implications

Targeted efforts must be made in order for the federal government to recruit the best and brightest, according a survey gauging student interest levels was featured in the May 2009 Partnership for Public Service eNews (electronic newsletter).

In April 2009, the Partnership surveyed its Call to Serve network to learn more about changing student interest levels in federal career and internship opportunities. Based on the responses of 258 career services professionals from 195 different colleges and universities across the country, the Partnership found that 90 percent of students are interested in government jobs and internships with a majority noting that interest levels have increased significantly since the presidential election in November.

While President Obama's call to serve has certainly resonated with students, his words alone cannot account for increasing student interest levels in federal employment. According to our survey, the economy, perceptions of federal job security, and a lack of alternative options in the private and nonprofit sectors are the major factors behind this surge in interest.

New job seekers are indeed interested in the federal government, and AmeriCorps is already statistically shown to be a pipeline for public service. Community service is indeed a growing trend in the United States, and it could not come at a better time. Many Americans are struggling to get by, but we are seeing is that empathy, as opposed to selfishness, is on the rise. Legislation like the Serve America Act and programs like Roosevelt Scholars will continue to have a direct, positive impact on the federal government, which effects the daily lives of Americans more than people realize.

The Serve America Act should be incredibly successful. As already noted, those engaged in organized community service such as AmeriCorps have a significantly higher likelihood of entering a career in Public Service. By expanding opportunities for both young and more experienced Americans to give back to their communities, a larger and stronger pipeline into public service will be created. If a stronger link can be created between programs like AmeriCorps and job opportunities in the federal government, more motivated individuals will seek government employment. The statistics show that membership in AmeriCorps has a direct correlation with entrance into a career in public service. In addition to the Serve America Act, programs like the Partnership's Call to Serve network are also necessary to capture the interest of college-age Americans.