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Statement of the Press Secretary

June 27, 1996

The President has repeatedly made clear that national service is one of his top priorities. He believes AmeriCorps encourages Americans of all ages to help rebuild communities and earn money for college.

Last year, House Republicans sought to eliminate the program, which would have denied thousands of Americans the opportunity to serve their country. The President vowed to veto any legislation to eliminate national service, and Republicans who tried came to see that he meant it. But last night, House Republicans showed they are willing to rehash this fight with the President by voting to scrap all funds for AmeriCorps.

The President remains firm: He will veto any bill that does not provide adequate funds for AmeriCorps. Republicans should rethink their strategy and work with the President -- not pick needless fights that they cannot, and will not, win.

Largely because Republicans proposed extreme spending bills last year that the President would not accept, they did not finish their work until the fiscal year was half over. Their tactics led to a record 13 appropriations bills and two government shutdowns. They should not head down this path again.



UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

February 11, 1996

George:

I thought you might be interested to see the enclosed copy of the first-ever annual report of the USDA AmeriCorps program, which I run. The report is being distributed widely to Members of Congress and their staffs, targeted editorial boards, constituency groups, the USDA political appointees in the states, AmeriCorps partner organizations, and state and local officials.

The USDA program is the largest single component of AmeriCorps, now engaging over 1,300 AmeriCorps Members in service in 45 states.

Some general report highlights:

- * USDA AmeriCorps Members in environmental projects performed flood recovery work on 75,300 acres, constructed or maintained 715 miles of trail, improved 6,176 acres of wildlife habitat, provided 885 landowners with water quality assistance, built or repaired 76 campground sites, planted 110,400 trees, made 42 recreation sites accessible for the disabled, restored 760 acres of fisheries habitat, and protected 67,483 acres of coastal land.
- * USDA AmeriCorps Members in nutrition and anti-hunger projects cooked and served 40,155 meals at soup kitchens, implemented 51 new sites for the Summer Food Service Program that fed 40,912 children, provided 391,542 people with donated food, gave food safety and nutrition presentations to 25,257 students and senior citizens, and helped 152 community gardens.
- * USDA AmeriCorps Members serving in rural development projects helped 390 low-income families secure new homes; 3,484 families obtain running water or modern bathrooms for the first time, 867 families repair health and safety hazards in their homes, and over 100 counties improve their emergency preparedness and response.
- * The 1,200 USDA AmeriCorps Members recruited 14,176 non-compensated volunteers to serve in community service projects. Thus, each AmeriCorps Member, on average, recruited more than 11 non-compensated volunteers. The AmeriCorps Members directly provided services to over 828,000 citizens and performed environmental work on over 234,000 acres of land.

A clear success both substantively and symbolically, AmeriCorps is obviously an achievement of great magnitude for the President. I have been honored to help turn the idea into reality.

Best wishes,

- Joel Berg

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AmeriCorps/USDA...at work

First Annual Report

