

# FOIA MARKER

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**Folder Title:**

Ford Hall Forum 1993 Volunteer Fair, Boston 9/11/93

**Stack:**

**S**

**Row:**

**66**

**Section:**

**2**

**Shelf:**

**8**

**Position:**

**1**

Rick  
I've sharpened it, but  
otherwise it looks good.

El:

REMARKS OF ELI SEGAL  
DIRECTOR, WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF NATIONAL SERVICE  
FORD HALL FORUM - 1993 VOLUNTEER FAIR  
BOSTON, 9/11/93

Thank you Bill. It is good to be home. Although my wife and I may be temporarily living in Washington, Boston is and will always be our home. And even in D.C., I have the chance to surround myself with ~~many of Boston's~~ ~~from Ben & Jerry's Mint Oreo~~ ~~after the Senate passed the President's historic national service initiative,~~ ~~Cookie ice cream,~~ ~~to our principal sponsor of the President's national service legislation,~~ that workhorse for national service and for the people of Massachusetts, Senator Edward Kennedy.

Finest. And today, just three days

I am proud to say that the finest United States Senator is

It is astounding to come back to Boston on this Saturday and see more people gathered here, intent on helping their communities, than are over at Faneuil Hall buying Mrs. Fields' cookies and ~~Ben & Jerry's~~ <sup>Steve's</sup> ice cream! Shopping for \_\_\_\_\_ rather than \_\_\_\_\_: what a perfect metaphor as we move from the decade of greed to the \_\_\_\_\_

You represent and reflect a new spirit in our city and in our country. It is reinvigorating that old political triangle [ -- no, not the one you read in the *National Enquirer* among Elvis, Julia Roberts and Tom Cruise -- I mean the relationships we see service weaving ] among individuals, communities and the federal government.

Boston has nearly four centuries' experience in creating community. When John Winthrop, aboard the *Arabella* and bound for the New World, told his fellow emigrants that [we must consider that] we shall be a city upon a hill, [for] the eyes of all people are upon us", he was exhorting our forbearers to seize their opportunity to create a new community in the wilderness.

That community was not easily achieved. Carved from the forest and defended repeatedly by force of arms, it was still a place that in our grandfathers' youth sported signs warning that "No Irish Need Apply". And they didn't even bother posting signs to warn off my grandfather and his fellow Jews.

Today, our desire for community is buffeted by problems of which John Winthrop -- or even our own parents -- could never have dreamed: illegal drugs and the crimes that surround their use; homelessness and endemic poverty; an environment so befouled that we can not trust the water we drink or the air we breathe.

And while our ancestors muscled their way to the common table, today we see chairs at that table being demanded by an astounding new array of immigrants. ~~"If current trends continue," writes demographer Martha Farnsworth Riche, "the United States will become a nation with no racial or ethnic majority" within our children's lifetimes -- indeed, in many of our major cities, this is already the case.~~

We are told in fact that within our children's lifetimes, America will become a nation with no racial or ethnic majority

How, then, are we to find common interest amongst such diversity? The day after Martin Luther King was killed, Robert Kennedy warned us what happens when societies fragment: "We learn, at the last, to look at our brothers as aliens, men with whom we share a city, but not a community; men bound to us in common dwelling but not in common effort. We learn to share only a common fear, only a common impulse to meet disagreement with force."

No government, no matter how vigorous or well intentioned, can legislate us into community. And, unlike our grandparents's time, it is no longer sufficient to expect the non-white, non-Western portion of our population to assimilate into a dominant majority. As demographer Riche has written, "in the future, the white Western majority will have to do some assimilating of its own." ]

Fundamentally, creating community will require the concerted efforts of all of us. Your presence here today is eloquent testimony to the fact that Boston can once again rise to the challenge. Long before there were Mrs. Fields and the other shops there, Faneuil Hall was the spot where a businessman and a lawyer -- John Hancock and Sam Adams -- led the public outcry against the Stamp Act. Those two patriots recognized that leadership consists of much more than protesting taxes. They understood that the city's private citizens must take the lead in fostering a sense of community -- here in Boston and throughout the country.

And they knew that their actions would likely end up costing them money -- in fact, commodities trader Hancock probably lost profit from every barrel of ~~tea~~<sup>tea?</sup> his followers threw into the Bay. From that time on, Massachusetts has been blessed by a citizenry that elevates the community's interest above short-term, personal interests.

[That tradition is at work within Boston's City Year program -- which is in many ways a model for our national efforts. City Year has shown us all how to recognize and utilize the private sector's community spirit. Lawyers provide pro bono legal assistance. Consultants help with strategic planning. Computer companies have provided equipment. A clothing manufacturer provided uniforms. Banks provide free checking accounts to volunteers. A host of other firms loan out experienced managers to take on leadership roles within the organization. And business sponsorship underwrites the costs of the teams of corpsmembers themselves.]

*Which brings us to you*

[Similarly, Your past service to others, or your willingness to begin serving now, provide the threads holding together the fabric of our neighborhoods, and of our City and of our nation. In an era when that fabric sometimes seems worn beyond recognition, service reaffirms both that our neighbors need us -- and that we need our neighbors. And service shows that our country deserves to be called a civilization, not for its absence of problems, but for its citizens' willingness to be responsible for solutions.

President Clinton holds a broad view of service, recognizing that it is a spirit essential to our definition of our country and of ourselves. Through service, we sustain our democracy and define our citizenship. Service becomes not an obligation to be endured or avoided, but the greatest right and the ultimate privilege of freedom.

[We would hope to sharpen the edge of service.] [Some, perhaps not appreciating how hard that kind of work can be, describe service] <sup>is more than something</sup> [as something] the more-fortunate do in their spare time, to feel better about themselves. [We would argue that] service is something each of us should do, because each of us can contribute, and -- recognizing that, as the President has said, service is the American way to change America -- because our country needs us to do so. <sup>Unlike the topics that monopolize the Evening news, the President's service is not a problem to be tackled, but a tool to be used.</sup> <sup>OR as the President puts it, service is the American way to change America.</sup>

At the same time <sup>as</sup> we aim to encourage [and stimulate] citizen involvement in their communities [and in the types of community organizations represented in this Convention Center] <sup>YOUR President</sup> [we also] hope to reinvent a new relationship for government with you, and with our communities and our community organizations. This, too, represents a change. Although service can and must exist independently of the federal government -- and thank heavens it did when that government's attention lapsed in the past -- it has become inescapable that our country's continued greatness demands that government participate in problem-solving.

~~My special day at home today is to talk with you~~

Which is what the newly enacted national service legislation tries to do. Like... [next page]

Unlike the topics that usually monopolize the evening news, national service is not a problem to be tackled, but a tool to be used. And government itself is best seen as a tool -- the reflected power of the individuals it serves. It can not be seen as the only solution to all that ails us; but if it is airily dismissed as "the problem", precious few real problems will ever be solved.

How, then, can we reinvent the role of the federal government in service?

Essentially, the government can fund programs and it can spotlight the work of others. Since our national service legislation received its final Congressional approval this past Wednesday, let me begin by outlining that legislative framework.

← Like President Kennedy's Peace Corps legislation, the National and Community Service Act of 1993 will unleash our nation's greatest natural resource -- the idealism and energy of our people. It will enlist substantial commitments from tens of thousands of Americans <sup>as early as 1994</sup> to improve our communities through their service. They will be tutoring our students, helping to immunize our babies, cleaning up our streams and parks, joining patrols of our streets, and doing the other hard and necessary work each of us would list as needed here in Boston. And participants will be working primarily through local non-profits, not some new Washington bureaucracy.

And like President Roosevelt's G.I. Bill, our Act will reward those who serve their country with increased educational opportunities. They will receive an educational benefit of nearly \$5000 after they've finished a full year of service, in addition to minimum wage while they're working.

As you can see, this is a new relationship between the government and the service participant. A central link between responsibility and opportunity has been established. The notion is not that these participants will supplant traditional part-time volunteer service -- the intention is for the members of this CorpsAmerica to supplement <sup>existing</sup> ~~their~~ activities by providing talented resources, available essentially full-time, to leverage the impact of those of us who want to help but cannot make the same commitment of time and focus.

Further, the President won't shy away from using this vital resource as effectively as possible. We elect a President to help us sort through the mass of challenges our nation confronts -- to set priorities. That is what the President will do with national service: use the tool where it is most needed and most useful. Let me give you an example: all of us are horrified that our country, a land of nearly unimaginable advantages despite its problems, has a higher rate of infant mortality than many third world countries. Many of those deaths can be prevented. The President has already taken steps to make infant vaccines cheaper and more available. But although most parents know that without those shots, their children can't start first grade, too many American parents wrongly believe that their kids can wait until then to get immunized. <sup>Why shouldn't</sup> It may be that the President decides that many national service volunteers <sup>should</sup> concentrate on convincing these parents not to wait, ~~also~~ helping them to bring their children into the clinics where they can get care, ~~setting up 800 #s~~ <sup>staffing</sup> the clinics after normal hours, <sup>setting up 800 #s for dispensing vital information on other ~~kind~~ kinds of preventative care.</sup>

These national priorities <sup>new</sup> [and standards] will be overseen by a government corporation: the Corporation for National Service. It will operate like a venture capital firm, seeking out and funding initiatives that will maximize returns to the public. For the most part, it will help local non-profit organizations, who will compete for funding based on their business plans and track records. To keep decision-making where the rubber meets the road, most applications will first be judged by nonpartisan state Commissions. It will be up to states and localities to determine how best to design programs to achieve the national goals. We know that what works for <sup>Brighton</sup> ~~Boston~~ might not be so effective in Brownsville, Texas -- and vice versa.

Once a program has been funded, it will be rigorously evaluated. We will demand results -- not rhetoric. We will demand good performance -- not good intentions. If a program doesn't work, we will cut our losses. And let me stop there for a minute: When I was in business, we tried many things, and some of them just plain didn't work. I never found that surprising. But for some reason, when it comes to government, the expectation [at least by some elements of the press] is that any failure is attributable to fraud or mismanagement. ~~It will be there with us when things get really bad that we can~~ ~~I hope you can help us communicate to the press that~~ innovation means taking risks -- and that means the risks of mis-steps, not the prospect of an unbroken series of triumphs. ~~You live by these rules every day & will try to live by them.~~

But when a program does work, we'll help expand it. The new Corporation will be relentless in seeking out the most profitable uses of its scarce resources. We are committed to proving that a federal program can be soft-hearted and hard-headed at the same time.

This new approach will be seen as a burden by some local organizations -- and as an opportunity by others. Competition for resources will force them to think clearly and carefully about their goals and the most efficient way to reach them. Our focus on results will mean that their next year's budget depends upon this year's performance. And any program seeking federal money must first obtain 25% of their program budget -- and 15% of their participants' wages -- from other sources. Let me say that again: no federal money will be spent unless the community has committed its own money to the effort. This will ensure that service programs grow locally instead of being transplanted from Washington.

Perhaps most importantly, this program will be nonpartisan, at all levels. Republican Congressman Steve Gunderson recently praised our program as combining "the idealism of the Democratic Party with the pragmatic realism of the Republican Party." I deeply appreciated those words -- but I hope that our program will eventually escape even those labels. Ultimately, national service must fuse **America's** realism with **America's** idealism.

And it must enlist the efforts of all Americans. In his Inaugural address, the President first challenged young people to participate, and then noted that "there is so much to be done -- enough, indeed, for millions of others who are still young in spirit to give of themselves in service, too. In serving, we recognize a simple, but powerful truth: We need each other, and we must care for one another."

Each of us will experience what the President calls "seasons of service". We might begin as toddlers, helping to clean the banks of the Charles -- and we may end as senior citizens, returning as part of the wonderful Older American Volunteer programs, or as a VISTA volunteer, and helping make learning a life-long experience for our peers, at the Cambridge Center for Adult Education. Just as the intensity of involvement will vary with our lives' circumstances, so will the federal role vary.

We intend to be active assisting with program funding or volunteer support, but even more often, we see the government sharing the spotlight, swapping ideas, and most of all, working as hard as you do on our common goals.

The organizations scattered throughout this Convention Center and this City, and most of you, have long recognized these central themes. Now you are allied with an activist President, committed to real change. Together, we will help our nation recapture the promise that drew John Winthrop, and all of our foremothers and forefathers, to this city on a hill. But it will require each of us to do our part.

The great civil rights worker Fanny Lou Hamer used to tell the story of the wise old man and the two little boys who thought they were very clever. They decided they would fool the old man by catching a small bird and cupping it in one boy's hands. They would then bring it to the old man and say: "old man, we have a bird in our hands. Is it alive or dead?" Their plan was that if he said the bird was dead, they would release it and let it fly away. If he said it was alive they would crush it and show him the dead bird. But when the boys brought the bird to the old man and asked him their question, he answered "it's in your hands."

In many ways, the fate of Massachusetts' part of national service is in each of our hands. Let us celebrate the opportunity in this responsibility, so that this city and this nation finally discharge our debt to our forbearers -- and our promises to our children.

I thank you, and I would be happy to take your questions.