



Nine for '09:

Nine ways for the next President to strengthen youth service when taking office in January 2009

Youth Service America urges you to commit to growing meaningful service opportunities for young people as a major plank in the platform of your candidacy.

About Youth Service America

A 501(c)(3) organization in Washington, D.C., Youth Service America has been a leader in advancing effectiveness and sustainability in the youth service and service-learning fields for over 20 years. We provide grants, resources, support, and coordination for partners in more than 100 countries. Our flagship program, Global Youth Service Day, engages millions of children and youth every April in service-learning projects that address critical issues facing their communities and celebrate their year-round service.

Youth are leaders and assets today

During the last two decades, we have witnessed young people transcend the old refrain that they are “the promise of tomorrow;” indeed, youth are leading the way to address society’s important needs *today*. Their service addresses issues vital to the nation’s prosperity, including natural disasters, education, hunger, poverty, gang activity, and myriad others.

More than ever, child development experts, community and faith-based organizations, and corporate foundations are recognizing youth not as problems to be fixed, but assets and resources to improve the nation. A growing body of research shows that participation in service – and especially service-learning – helps boost student achievement, civically engages young people in their schools and communities, and helps combat delinquency and the drop-out epidemic.¹

Make a historic call for youth service

In order to maximize and sustain the impact of youth service, the nation must commit to making seats for young people at the decision-making table, offering opportunities for meaningful and sustained service and service-learning, and establishing service as the common expectation and common experience for all youth. Surveys show that the number one reason why young people serve is because they are asked. The next President has an opportunity to make a historic call for youth service in order to transform the way the nation approaches and solves its most difficult problems.

Summary of Recommendations *(details on pp. 4-5)*

- 1) Grow AmeriCorps’ membership to 250,000 by 2013
- 2) Expand Learn and Serve America to engage 4.5 million students by 2013
- 3) Send a U.S. Youth Delegate to the United Nations
- 4) Make a Summer of Service a rite of passage
- 5) Create a Global Service Fellowship Program
- 6) Double the Peace Corps to its 1966 high of 16,000 members by its 50th anniversary in 2011
- 7) Strengthen “Serve-Study” for college students
- 8) Found the U.S. Public Service Academy
- 9) Build on the Federal Youth Coordination Act with a White House Office of National Youth Policy

¹ See, e.g., Billig, S. H. (2004) *Heads, Hearts, and Hands: The Research on K-12 Service-Learning*. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation Accessed online at http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/Billig_Article2.pdf

The growth of youth service and civic engagement

Youth volunteering rates in the U.S. are at an all-time high

The increase has been fueled in large part by a more than doubling in volunteering by older teenagers (16-19) since 1989, from 13.4% to 28.4%.² In 2005, more than 83% of college freshman reported that they had volunteered during high school, the highest rate since the survey began in 1984.

Youth voting surged in 2004 and 2006

Concurrent with this long-term growth in youth service is a more recent sharp increase in voting: 47% of young people ages 18-24 voted in 2004, up from 36% in 2000. Their share in the electorate also grew from 7.8% to 9.3% between the two elections.³ Moreover, in the last Presidential election, young people voted at the highest rate in a decade and cast more votes than in any other election since 1972.⁴ This upward trend in youth voting carried over to the 2006 midterm election as well. Between 22-24% (depending on the calculation method) of young people 18-29 voted, rivaling the high water mark of 24% in the 1994 election. This surge proved decisive in key Senate elections and resulted in its change in party leadership.^{5 6}

AmeriCorps has engaged more than 500,000 members since its inception in 1994, revolutionizing the way communities address their most pressing unmet needs.

- AmeriCorps led the way in hurricane recovery through the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) in the Gulf Coast, sent a generation of high achieving graduates to teach in the poorest schools through Teach for America, helped City Year build a powerful civilian corps to improve urban communities, and inspired hundreds of thousands of young people to dedicate themselves in service through countless local community- and faith-based organizations.
- In addition, AmeriCorps members themselves have earned education awards worth more than \$1.5 billion, making the dream of higher education more attainable.

Learn and Serve America has engaged more than 15 million young people in high quality service-learning since 1990 and has risen the percentage of K-12 schools incorporating service-learning to 33%.

- The program provides competitive and formula grants to support service-learning, a teaching and learning strategy that *inspires students to apply the academic lessons they learn in the classroom to service projects that address the needs of the community*. School becomes more relevant to students because they employ what they learn, building skills in problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork to solve real-life problems.
- A growing body of research suggests that Learn and Serve America's high-quality service-learning *projects improve grades, increase attendance in school, and develop students' personal and social responsibility*.⁷ In addition to its benefits for student achievement, Learn and Serve America supports a strong pipeline of young people who go on to a lifetime of service and philanthropy.
- Such success is even more impressive in light of the program's cost-effectiveness: At an average cost of only \$26 per participant, Learn and Serve America leverages private and community resources to *yield \$4 in services to the community for each \$1 invested* by the government.

² Corporation for National and Community Service. (2006) *Volunteer Growth in America: A Review of Trends Since 1974*. Accessed online at http://www.cns.gov/pdf/06_1203_volunteer_growth_factsheet.pdf

³ M.H. Lopez, E. Kirby, and J. Sagoff. (2004) *Fact Sheet: The Youth Vote 2004*. Circle: The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement. Accessed online at http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS_Youth_Voting_72-04.pdf

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ E.H. Kirby and K.B. Marcelo. (2006) *Young Voters in the 2006 Elections*. Circle: The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement. Accessed online at <http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS-Midterm06.pdf>

⁶ Harvard University's Institute of Politics. (2007) *The 12th Biannual Youth Survey on Politics and Public Service*. Accessed online at http://www.iop.harvard.edu/pdfs/survey_s2007_execsumm.pdf

⁷ See note 1.

Youth Service America's "Nine for '09" candidate proposal (cont'd)

The Peace Corps has engaged nearly 190,000 Americans in effective people-to-people community service in 139 nations since 1961. Tens of thousands of young people who provide ongoing leadership to our nation began their service as a Peace Corps volunteer.

- Currently, 85% of the more than 7,700 Peace Corps volunteers in the field are age 20 to 29.
- Volunteers currently serve in more than 70 countries, working in the fields of education, health (including and especially HIV/AIDS prevention), business, environment, youth development, and agriculture.
- Volunteers receive intense cross-cultural training and experience, including training in literally hundreds of different foreign languages and dialects.
- Through educational partnerships with nearly 90 colleges and universities in 36 states, more than 500 individuals incorporate Peace Corps service (or continue to serve following service) as part of their graduate studies.

Global Youth Service Day engages millions of young people in more than 100 countries each April to celebrate the year-round impact of youth service. Beginning in the U.S. as National Youth Service Day in 1988, Global Youth Service Day is now a worldwide phenomenon. From Idaho to Iraq, Missouri to Montenegro, young people come together for this event to showcase the tremendous impact they make in solving problems across the world. The international event is led by Youth Service America, with the Global Youth Action Network, and an International Coordinating Committee of organizations.

Recent funding cuts jeopardize sustainability

Few government expenditures provide both the economic and social benefits of youth service. Despite bold calls to service from the President following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, both the Administration and Congress have faltered in their commitments to national service.

From the Post-9/11 "Call to Service" to Budget Cuts in 2005

In President Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address, he called upon every American dedicate at least two years or 4,000 hours to the service of others⁸. The following year, he asked Congress to expand AmeriCorps by 50% – from 50,000 to 75,000 members.

Unfortunately, AmeriCorps membership has never reached the President's goal; the program hit its high water mark of 69,000 members in Fiscal Year 2004. Since then, congressional appropriations for the Corporation for National and Community Service (whose portfolio includes AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and the Senior Corps) have been on a steady decline. In fact, the Administration's Fiscal Year 2008 budget request to Congress proposed deepening last year's funding cuts the Corporation for National and Community Service. Down by 11% from \$935 million in Fiscal Year 2004, the President's proposed budget for the Corporation for Fiscal Year 2008 is \$829 million⁹.

National Service Programs Suffer

These cuts not only retreat from the goal of expanding AmeriCorps, but also necessitate either a reduction of the number of participants or the proportion who serve full-time. Indeed, due to the cutbacks, only 41% of AmeriCorps members now serve full-time¹⁰.

Learn and Serve America's funding cut in the Administration's budget request is especially severe – down to \$32.1 million. If Congress adopts this cut, it would continue a downward trend from the program's traditional level of \$43 million, initiated by the first major cut to \$37.1 million in Fiscal Year 2006. If enacted, the additional proposed cut could seriously jeopardize the effectiveness and sustainability of the only federal program that leverages community service in schools in every state in the country.

⁸ See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/freedomcorps/photoessay/index.html>

⁹ *Fiscal Year 2008 Congressional Budget Justification*. (2007) Corporation for National and Community Service. Accessed online at http://www.cns.gov/pdf/2008_budget_justification.pdf

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 167

Youth Service America's "Nine for '09" candidate proposal (cont'd)

A nine point youth service platform for 2009

In addition to the minimum step of reversing the downward trend in the federal budget request for national service, there are a number of key initiatives the next President should implement to harness the energy, idealism, and unique perspective that young people have in addressing society's most pressing needs. The following are brief descriptions of nine bold steps in this pursuit; more detailed information on any or all of these can be available upon request.

1) Grow AmeriCorps' membership to 250,000 by 2013. Currently, just under 70,000 AmeriCorps members work to meet the nation's most pressing needs, saving taxpayers millions every year. They work as tutors and mentors in schools and afterschool programs, care for the elderly, work to conserve the environment, providing disaster relief and reconstruction, as well as many other critically needed services. A striking illustration of AmeriCorps's critical role for the country was its members' response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. When other traditional government agencies failed, AmeriCorps members were on site leading disaster recovery efforts. An entire generation of young people is now poised to dedicate a year or more of their lives to service; the nation cannot afford to miss the economic and social returns of this important opportunity.

2) Expand Learn and Serve America to engage 4.5 million students by 2013. With a tiny appropriation yielding four dollars in service for each federal dollar invested,¹¹ the program currently supports 1-1.5 million students in service-learning every year. Moreover, Learn and Serve America's infrastructure extends beyond the students it directly engages: approximately 33% of K-12 schools incorporate service-learning into their curriculum. To capitalize on the significant advances both in prevalence and quality of this important teaching and learning strategy, we urge the next president to make service-learning opportunities available in every American school, from Kindergarten through Higher Education.

3) Send a youth delegate to the United Nations. The UN has invited its member nations six times to include youth in their delegations.¹² In 2005, 30 countries (including Canada, Mexico, and the United Kingdom) sent 47 Youth Delegates to the October meeting of the General Assembly. Yet the U.S. is conspicuously absent among the nations including youth in their formal delegations. Such representation is critical to understanding and addressing the myriad development and other issues that directly affect young people in the United States and across the globe.

4) Make a Summer of Service a rite of passage. If passed, the Summer of Service Act (S.1128 / H.R. 1880) would create a grants program for non-profit organizations to engage students entering the 6th-9th grades in a summer of service-learning activities. In addition, each student would receive a \$500 educational award upon completing their summer of service. This initiative would reduce the "summer slide" for young people who are generally too young to work, but yet old enough to make meaningful contributions to their communities. Research has shown that this is a critical age for many young people in both promoting pro-social behavior and avoiding risky choices.

5) Create a Global Service Fellowship Program. If passed, the Global Service Fellowship Program Act (S. 1464) would increase the number of Americans volunteering abroad every year to 10,000. Each U.S. Representative and Senator would nominate fellows in the form of a voucher for travel and international volunteering expenses to be redeemable through participating NGOs, faith-based organizations, and overseas service-learning programs at colleges and universities. This program would expand the important work of the Peace Corps by allowing Americans to serve shorter terms (from several weeks up to one year) that would appeal to a broader range of participants with varying

¹¹ Brandeis University, Center for Human Resources. (1999) *National Evaluation of Learn and Service America*. Accessed online at http://www.learnandserve.gov/pdf/lssa_evaluation.pdf

¹² See [A/RES/50/81](#), [A/RES/52/83](#), [54/120](#), [56/117](#), [58/133](#), and [59/148](#).

Youth Service America's "Nine for '09" candidate proposal (cont'd)

obligations at home or work. It would constitute an important step in both enhancing U.S. public diplomacy abroad and meeting critical development needs that exist across the world.

6) Double the Peace Corps to its 1966 high of 16,000 members by its 50th anniversary in 2011.

President Kennedy hoped the Peace Corps would one day grow to 100,000 members, yet the program peaked at 16,000 in 1966.¹³ President Bush called for the doubling of the Peace Corps membership (then about 7,000) in his 2002 State of the Union Address, but it remains at about 7,800. Doubling the Peace Corps to 16,000 members by its 50th anniversary in 2011 would send a message to both Americans and the rest of the world that we are serious about leading the effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

7) Strengthen "Serve-Study" for college students. Institutions of higher education (IHEs) are currently required to dedicate at least 7% of Federal Work-Study funds to support students in community service activities. Unfortunately, many colleges and universities routinely fall short of this statutory requirement of the Higher Education Act. The historical intent of this program was more than to simply provide colleges with a low-wage labor force for cafeterias, libraries, and other campus jobs. Importantly, it also sought to connect students to the broader community through service. After 9/11, President Bush recognized this in proposing the increase of "serve-study" to account for 50% of federal work-study allocations, echoing calls from both President Clinton and General Colin Powell in 1998. Nonetheless, Congress has not raised this percentage and tapped into this enormous resource of collegiate community service.

At a minimum, current law should be more carefully enforced, and colleges should be required to be in compliance in order to be eligible to receive grants from the Corporation for National and Community Service. Further, we recommend 1) that the Corporation give priority to colleges that exceed these minimum requirements and 2) that the next President phase in an increased percentage commitment to community service in the Federal Work-Study provisions of the Higher Education Act.

8) Found the U.S. Public Service Academy. The U.S. Public Service Academy would be America's first national civilian university, a flagship institution designed to build a "more perfect union" by developing leaders of character dedicated to service in the public sector. Modeled on the military service academies, the Public Service Academy will provide a rigorous undergraduate education followed by five years of civilian service to the country. The U.S. Public Service Academy Act (S. 960/H.R. 1671) would establish this institution to develop young leaders with the character, intellect, and experience necessary to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. For more information, see <http://uspublicserviceacademy.org/>.

9) Build on the Federal Youth Coordination Act with a White House Office of National Youth Policy. In October 2003, the White House Task Force on Disadvantaged Youth released its final report, finding that federal programs aimed at serving disadvantaged youth are spread across 12 federal departments with little communication or coordination among them. In response, Congress passed the Tom Osborne Federal Youth Coordination Act¹⁴ in 2006 to establish a council tasked with recommending ways to bring these efforts out of their programmatic silos. Importantly, not only would the heads of the relevant federal agencies serve as members on the council, but so would disadvantaged youth themselves. This council's creation represents a landmark in giving youth a strong voice on policies that directly affect them, but Congress has yet to fund it. The next President could not only ensure that the Council is funded and fully implemented according to its statutory mandate, but expand on its work with a dedicated White House Office of National Youth Policy.

For more information, please contact Youth Service America's Director of Government Relations, Ross Wilson, at 202-296-2992 ext. 125 or rwilson@ysa.org.

¹³ http://www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm?contentid=250267&knlgAreaID=115&subsecid=306

¹⁴ Title VIII of P.L. 109-365