

116TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# S. 3642

To mobilize individuals in the United States in the fight against coronavirus by expanding volunteer opportunities in AmeriCorps, expanding employment opportunities at the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and utilizing the expertise of Peace Corps volunteer leaders whose service ended on March 15, 2020, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 7, 2020

Mr. VAN HOLLEN (for Mr. MARKEY (for himself, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL)) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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## A BILL

To mobilize individuals in the United States in the fight against coronavirus by expanding volunteer opportunities in AmeriCorps, expanding employment opportunities at the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and utilizing the expertise of Peace Corps volunteer leaders whose service ended on March 15, 2020, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Undertaking National  
3 Initiatives to Tackle Epidemic Act of 2020” or the  
4 “UNITE Act of 2020”.

5 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

6 Congress makes the following findings:

7 (1) The outbreak of the novel coronavirus,  
8 SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19 (referred to  
9 in this Act as the “coronavirus”), has disrupted the  
10 lives of all individuals in the United States and re-  
11 quired enormous sacrifice. In following the guidance  
12 of public health officials, individuals in the United  
13 States have and can continue to play a key role in  
14 defeating their common, invisible enemy.

15 (2) The Corporation for National and Commu-  
16 nity Service (referred to in this Act as “CNCS”),  
17 through the health, disaster, and poverty services  
18 administered by the CNCS under the 3 flagship  
19 AmeriCorps programs (AmeriCorps VISTA,  
20 AmeriCorps NCCC, and AmeriCorps State and Na-  
21 tional Volunteers), is uniquely positioned to aid  
22 frontline workers and communities most impacted by  
23 the coronavirus public health emergency if the Presi-  
24 dent of the United States fully mobilizes those 3  
25 programs.

1           (3) The Federal Emergency Management Agen-  
2           cy (referred to in this section as “FEMA”), tasked  
3           with leading aspects of the whole-of-government re-  
4           sponse to the coronavirus outbreak, is reportedly  
5           understaffed of those frontline workers that are es-  
6           sential to responding to the public health emergency.

7           (4) On March 15, 2020, the Peace Corps invol-  
8           untarily ended the service of approximately 7,300  
9           volunteers. Many of them acquired public health  
10          skills in countries abroad, which may also be applied  
11          to further service in AmeriCorps, service in FEMA,  
12          or continuing service in the Peace Corps once oper-  
13          ations of the Peace Corps are to resume.

14 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF THE SENATE.**

15          It is the sense of the Senate that—

16           (1) the President should fully utilize the com-  
17           petencies of the Federal Government workforce to  
18           battle the outbreak of coronavirus, the worst global  
19           health emergency the United States has faced in a  
20           century, as well as make available expanded opportu-  
21           nities for individuals in the United States desiring to  
22           serve their country in its time of need;

23           (2) the President should elevate the role of  
24           CNCS within the whole-of-government response to

1 the coronavirus outbreak, including by urging its  
2 Chief Executive Officer to—

3 (A) take steps to actively encourage vol-  
4 unteerism and specifically encourage individuals  
5 in the United States to serve as volunteers in  
6 AmeriCorps programs;

7 (B) prioritize AmeriCorps grants that pro-  
8 vide assistance to those most impacted by the  
9 coronavirus public health emergency and recruit  
10 the maximum number of volunteers authorized  
11 by law, particularly focusing on the recently un-  
12 employed; and

13 (C) provide State Commissions, as defined  
14 in section 101 of the National and Community  
15 Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12511), with  
16 the flexibility to award and amend grants and  
17 to remove undue burdens relating to the  
18 onboarding of volunteers;

19 (3) the United States should expand the Cadre  
20 of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees (CORE)  
21 program, administered by the Federal Emergency  
22 Management Agency, to enlist individuals in the  
23 United States to solve public health and supply-man-  
24 agement challenges related to the coronavirus out-

1 break, as well as challenges related to wildfires, hur-  
2 ricanes, and other disasters; and

3 (4) bolstering the number full-time positions at  
4 the Federal Emergency Management Agency will  
5 also expand national service opportunities for quali-  
6 fied individuals in the United States who have be-  
7 come unemployed or underemployed as a result of  
8 the coronavirus outbreak, including the approxi-  
9 mately 7,300 Peace Corps volunteers whose service  
10 ended on March 15, 2020.

11 **SEC. 4. MOBILIZING PROGRAMS IN THE CORONAVIRUS**  
12 **PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY.**

13 (a) **PRIORITIZING CERTAIN AGREEMENTS.—**

14 (1) **IN GENERAL.—**Notwithstanding any provi-  
15 sion of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973  
16 (42 U.S.C. 4950 et seq.) or the National and Com-  
17 munity Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12501 et  
18 seq.), the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS, in con-  
19 sultation with the Secretary of Health and Human  
20 Services, the Director of the Centers for Disease  
21 Control and Prevention, the Administrator of the  
22 Federal Emergency Management Agency, State gov-  
23 ernments, and State Commissions, as defined in sec-  
24 tion 101 of the National and Community Service Act  
25 of 1990, shall, for the period described in paragraph

1 (2), prioritize existing agreements, or enter into new  
2 agreements, with public and private nonprofit orga-  
3 nizations, that will direct volunteers in programs ad-  
4 ministered by CNCS to assignments that assist indi-  
5 viduals most impacted by the coronavirus public  
6 health emergency, including assignments—

7 (A) providing support services to veterans,  
8 homeless populations, the elderly, and other in-  
9 dividuals who may be most vulnerable during  
10 the coronavirus public health emergency;

11 (B) supporting health care professionals  
12 and related positions;

13 (C) offering before- and after-school tutor-  
14 ing and instruction for children in low-income  
15 areas, and offering adult basic skills and lit-  
16 eracy tutoring and instruction, including  
17 through remote learning;

18 (D) expanding broadband infrastructure  
19 for underserved and rural communities;

20 (E) performing functions consistent with  
21 implementation of the decennial census; and

22 (F) performing other functions consistent  
23 with addressing the coronavirus public health  
24 emergency, including assisting with testing and  
25 contact tracing.

1           (2) PERIOD.—The period described in this  
2 paragraph—

3           (A) shall begin on the date of enactment of  
4 this Act; and

5           (B) shall end—

6           (i) not earlier than the date of the  
7 conclusion of the coronavirus public health  
8 emergency; and

9           (ii) not later than 2 years after the  
10 conclusion of such emergency.

11       (b) AUTHORIZATION FOR ADDITIONAL RECRUIT-  
12 MENT OF AMERICORPS VOLUNTEERS.—

13       (1) IN GENERAL.—

14       (A) INCREASE IN NUMBER OF POSI-  
15 TIONS.—Section 121(f)(1)(B) of the National  
16 and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C.  
17 12571(f)(1)(B)) is amended—

18           (i) in clause (vi), by striking “and” at  
19 the end;

20           (ii) in clause (vii), by adding “and” at  
21 the end; and

22           (iii) by adding at the end the fol-  
23 lowing:

24           “(viii) 500,000 for each of fiscal years  
25 2020 through 2022;”.

1 (B) REAUTHORIZATIONS.—

2 (i) AMERICORPS VISTA.—Section  
3 501(a)(1) of the Domestic Volunteer Serv-  
4 ice Act of 1973 (42 U.S.C. 5081(a)(1)) is  
5 amended by striking “\$100,000,000 for  
6 fiscal year 2010 and such sums as may be  
7 necessary for each of the fiscal years 2011  
8 through 2014” and inserting “such sums  
9 as may be necessary for each of fiscal  
10 years 2020 through 2022”.

11 (ii) AMERICORPS NCCC.—Section  
12 501(a)(1)(A) of the National and Commu-  
13 nity Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C.  
14 12681(a)(1)(A)) is amended—

15 (I) by striking clauses (i) and  
16 (ii); and

17 (II) by striking “title I—” and  
18 inserting “title I, such sums as may  
19 be necessary for each of fiscal years  
20 2020 through 2022.”.

21 (iii) AMERICORPS STATE AND NA-  
22 TIONAL VOLUNTEERS.—Section 501(a)(2)  
23 of the National and Community Service  
24 Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12681(a)(2)) is



1                   amended by striking “2010 through 2014”  
2                   and inserting “2020 through 2022”.

3                   (2) REQUIREMENT.—To fulfill the purposes of  
4                   subsection (a), the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS  
5                   shall expedite the recruitment and selection of volun-  
6                   teers for an assignment described in subsection (a)  
7                   who are—

8                   (A) unemployed veterans;

9                   (B) individuals who become unemployed or  
10                  underemployed as a result of the coronavirus  
11                  public health emergency; and

12                  (C) AmeriCorps members, Peace Corps  
13                  volunteers, and United States Fulbright schol-  
14                  ars, who have had their service ended as a re-  
15                  sult of such emergency.

16                  (3) ELIGIBILITY.—

17                  (A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any  
18                  other provision of law—

19                          (i) any individual who is authorized to  
20                          work in the United States, including any  
21                          individual granted Deferred Action for  
22                          Childhood Arrivals (DACA) pursuant to  
23                          the program announced by the Secretary  
24                          of Homeland Security on June 15, 2012,  
25                          and any individual granted Temporary

1 Protected Status pursuant to section  
2 244(a)(1) of the Immigration and Nation-  
3 ality Act (8 U.S.C. 1254a(a)(1)), may not  
4 be disqualified from being recruited or se-  
5 lected for any assignment described in sub-  
6 section (a) based solely on his or her citi-  
7 zenship or immigration status; and

8 (ii) any individual who has filed for  
9 bankruptcy, or who has a poor credit rat-  
10 ing, determined by the Chief Executive Of-  
11 ficer of CNCS to be the result of the  
12 coronavirus public health emergency may  
13 not be disqualified from being recruited or  
14 selected for any assignment described in  
15 subsection (a) based solely on such bank-  
16 ruptcy or credit reporting.

17 (B) CLARIFICATION.—No individual de-  
18 scribed in clause (i) or (ii) of subparagraph (A)  
19 who is recruited or selected for an assignment  
20 described in subsection (a) shall become dis-  
21 qualified from continuing to serve in such as-  
22 signment after the expiration of the period de-  
23 scribed in subsection (a)(2) solely on the basis  
24 of his or her citizenship or immigration status,  
25 bankruptcy status, or credit score.

1 (c) BRIEFING TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 30  
2 days after the date of enactment of this Act, and every  
3 180 days thereafter through fiscal year 2022, the Chief  
4 Executive Officer of CNCS shall submit a report, to the  
5 Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of  
6 the Senate and the Committee on Education and Labor  
7 of the House of Representatives, on the operating plan of  
8 the CNCS to carry out subsections (a) and (b), including  
9 the amendments under subsection (b).

10 (d) ENHANCED STIPEND.—Section 105(b)(2)(A) of  
11 the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (42 U.S.C.  
12 4955(b)(2)(A)) is amended to read as follows:

13 “(A) beginning for fiscal year 2020, the min-  
14 imum allowance is not less than an amount equal to  
15 200 percent of the income official poverty line (as  
16 defined by the Office of Management and Budget,  
17 and revised annually in accordance with section  
18 673(2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act  
19 (42 U.S.C. 9902(2))) applicable to a family of 1;  
20 and”.

21 (e) CEILING ON STIPEND FOR GRANTEES.—Section  
22 189 of the National and Community Service Act of 1990  
23 (42 U.S.C. 12645c) is amended—

24 (1) in subsection (a), by striking “\$18,000”  
25 and inserting “\$25,000”; and

1           (2) in subsection (e)(1), by striking “\$19,500”  
2           and inserting “\$30,000”.

3           (f) **WAIVER OF MATCHING FUNDS REQUIRE-**  
4 **MENTS.**—Section 189A of the National and Community  
5 Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12645d) is amended—

6           (1) in the section heading, by inserting “;  
7           **MATCHING FUNDS DURING CORONAVIRUS PUB-**  
8           **LIC HEALTH EMERGENCY**” after “**COMMU-**  
9           **NITIES**”;

10           (2) by redesignating subsection (b) as sub-  
11           section (c); and

12           (3) by inserting after subsection (a) the fol-  
13           lowing:

14           “(b) **COVID–19 RESPONSE.**—Notwithstanding any  
15 other provision of law, an entity that receives assistance  
16 from the Corporation for any program under the national  
17 service laws (including a State Commission and an entity  
18 receiving subgrant funds) during the coronavirus public  
19 health emergency, as defined in section 4(g) of the Under-  
20 taking National Initiatives to Tackle Epidemic Act of  
21 2020, shall not be subject to any requirements to provide  
22 matching funds for any such program, and the Federal  
23 share of such assistance for a recipient (including for a  
24 State Commission and a subgrant recipient) may be 100  
25 percent.”.

1 (g) CORONAVIRUS PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY DE-  
2 FINED.—In this section, the term “coronavirus public  
3 health emergency” means the public health emergency de-  
4 clared by the Secretary of Health and Human Services  
5 under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42  
6 U.S.C. 247d) on January 31, 2020, with respect to  
7 COVID–19.

8 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION FOR SURGE CAPACITY FOR FED-**  
9 **ERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY.**

10 (a) IN GENERAL.—For fiscal years 2020 through  
11 2022 and subject to the appropriation of funds, the Ad-  
12 ministrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agen-  
13 cy shall appoint, administer, and expedite the training of  
14 an additional 62,000 Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery  
15 Employees, under the Response and Recover Directorate  
16 (referred to in this section as “CORE employees”) under  
17 the Office of Response and Recovery, above the level of  
18 such employees in fiscal year 2019, to address the  
19 coronavirus public health emergency and other disasters  
20 and public emergencies.

21 (b) DETAIL OF CORE EMPLOYEES.—A CORE em-  
22 ployee may be detailed, through mutual agreement and on  
23 a non-reimbursable basis, to any Federal agency or to a  
24 State, local, or Tribal government to fulfill an assignment  
25 consistent with the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and

1 Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.) and  
2 emergency work (as defined in section 206.225 of title 44,  
3 Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor thereto),  
4 including—

5 (1) providing logistical support for the supply  
6 chain of medical equipment and other goods involved  
7 in COVID–19 response efforts;

8 (2) facilitating COVID–19 testing and surveil-  
9 lance activities;

10 (3) tracing contacts of infected individuals and  
11 the status of the individuals while being quar-  
12 antined;

13 (4) providing nutritional assistance to vulner-  
14 able populations; and

15 (5) carrying out other disaster preparedness  
16 and response functions for other emergencies and  
17 natural disasters.

18 (c) REQUIREMENT.—As soon as feasible, the Admin-  
19 istrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency  
20 shall make public job announcements to fill the CORE em-  
21 ployee positions authorized under subsection (a), which  
22 shall prioritize hiring from among the following groups of  
23 individuals:

24 (1) Unemployed veterans of the Armed Forces.

1           (2) Individuals who have become unemployed or  
2 underemployed as a result of the coronavirus public  
3 health emergency.

4           (3) AmeriCorps members, Peace Corps Volun-  
5 teers, and United States Fulbright Scholars who  
6 have had their service terms ended as a result of the  
7 coronavirus public health emergency.

8           (4) Recent graduates of public health, medical,  
9 nursing, social work, or related health-services pro-  
10 grams.

11       (d) HIRING.—The Administrator of the Federal  
12 Emergency Management Agency shall—

13           (1) hire the employees authorized under this  
14 section in accordance with section 306(b)(1) of the  
15 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency  
16 Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5149(b)(1)); and

17           (2) use relevant statutory authority in effect on  
18 the day before the date of enactment of this Act to  
19 allow regional offices and site managers to advertise  
20 for and hire employees under this section.

21       (e) TRAINING.—The Administrator of the Federal  
22 Emergency Management Agency may make appropriate  
23 adjustments to the standard training course curriculum  
24 for employees under this section to include on-site  
25 trainings at regional offices of the Federal Emergency

1 Management Agency, virtual trainings, or trainings con-  
2 ducted by other Federal, State, local, or Tribal agencies  
3 to fulfill functions described in subsection (b).

4 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
5 are authorized to be appropriated to the Administrator of  
6 the Federal Emergency Management Agency  
7 \$6,500,000,000, for each of fiscal years 2020, 2021, and  
8 2022, of which not less than \$1,500,000,000 shall be used  
9 each fiscal year for the administrative costs associated  
10 with carrying out this section.

11 (g) ELIGIBILITY FOR HIRING.—For the purposes of  
12 hiring employees under this section—

13 (1) any individual who is authorized to work in  
14 the United States, including any individual granted  
15 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) pur-  
16 suant to the program announced by the Secretary of  
17 Homeland Security on June 15, 2012, and any indi-  
18 vidual granted Temporary Protected Status pursu-  
19 ant to section 244(a)(1) of the Immigration and Na-  
20 tionality Act (8 U.S.C. 1254a(a)(1)), may not be  
21 disqualified from being hired as an employee under  
22 this section based solely on his or her citizenship or  
23 immigration status; and

24 (2) any individual who has filed bankruptcy, or  
25 who has a poor credit rating, determined by the Ad-



1 administrator of the Federal Emergency Management  
2 Agency to be a result of the coronavirus public  
3 health emergency may not be disqualified from being  
4 hired as an employee under this section based solely  
5 on such bankruptcy or credit rating.

6 (h) CORONAVIRUS PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY  
7 DEFINED.—In this section, the term “coronavirus public  
8 health emergency” has the meaning given the term in sec-  
9 tion 4(g).

10 **SEC. 6. PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER REENROLLMENT ELIGI-**  
11 **BILITY AND TRANSITION ASSISTANCE.**

12 (a) ASSISTANCE FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS  
13 WHOSE SERVICE ENDED INVOLUNTARILY.—Notwith-  
14 standing section 5 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C.  
15 2504), with respect to any Peace Corps volunteer whose  
16 service ended involuntarily on March 15, 2020 (or earlier,  
17 in the case of any volunteer who was serving in China or  
18 Mongolia), when the Director of the Peace Corps sus-  
19 pended all volunteer operations due to the coronavirus  
20 public health emergency, the Director of the Peace Corps  
21 shall—

22 (1) continue to provide the health care de-  
23 scribed in section 5(e) of such Act to the volunteer  
24 during the period beginning on March 15, 2020, and  
25 ending on the earlier of September 15, 2020, or the

1 date on which the volunteers begins employment, to  
2 supplement the benefits to which the volunteer is  
3 otherwise entitled under section 5 of such Act;

4 (2) waive all nonmedical application require-  
5 ments for the reenrollment of the volunteer during  
6 the 1-year period beginning on March 15, 2020;

7 (3) expedite the medical clearance for such vol-  
8 unteer to facilitate reenrollment;

9 (4) permit the volunteer, to the extent possible,  
10 to resume the activity in which the volunteer had  
11 been serving at the time of his or her involuntary  
12 end of service, or any other activity, by mutual  
13 agreement; and

14 (5) provide the volunteer, beginning on the date  
15 of reenrollment, with the compensation, allowances,  
16 benefits, and other terms and conditions of service  
17 to which the volunteer is entitled under such Act.

18 (b) REPORT ON RESTART OF PEACE CORPS OPER-  
19 ATIONS FOLLOWING END OF PUBLIC HEALTH EMER-  
20 GENCY.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the en-  
21 actment of this Act, the Director of the Peace Corps shall  
22 submit a report to the Committee on Foreign Relations  
23 of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of  
24 the House of Representatives that describes the efforts of  
25 the Peace Corps—

1           (1) to offer reenrollment to each Peace Corps  
2 volunteer whose service ended involuntarily on  
3 March 15, 2020 (or earlier, in the case of any volun-  
4 teer who was serving in China or Mongolia), due to  
5 the coronavirus public health emergency;

6           (2) to obtain approval from countries, as nec-  
7 essary, to return reenrolled volunteers to their pre-  
8 vious assignments;

9           (3) to provide additional measures necessary for  
10 the safety and health of volunteers, including devel-  
11 oping contingency plans in the event overseas oper-  
12 ations are disrupted by a future COVID–19 out-  
13 break;

14           (4) to maintain adequate volunteer recruitment  
15 levels for future cohorts; and

16           (5) to identify the anticipated additional appro-  
17 priations or new statutory authorities that would be  
18 necessary to achieve the goal of safely redeploying  
19 7,300 Peace Corps volunteers during the 1-year pe-  
20 riod beginning on the date on which Peace Corps op-  
21 erations resume.

○