

# EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

## AMERICORPS: ANOTHER FAILED ELITIST PROGRAM

**HON. GERALD B.H. SOLOMON**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 4, 1995*

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, in typical liberal fashion, the President 2 years ago chose to respond to declining voluntarism by throwing Federal money and bureaucrats at the problem. At the time, I warned against this wasteful use of limited tax dollars because it would jeopardize worthwhile and necessary projects.

Lo and behold, 2 years later, that is exactly what happened. President Clinton's pet project was funded at the expense of needed veterans' health care projects. Mr. Speaker, veterans are people who know all there is to know about national service and deserve the assistance our limited resources can provide. To that end, my good friend and chairman of the Veterans' Committee, BOB STUMP, and I sponsored an amendment to restore the funding for VA outpatient clinics by rescinding funds from AmeriCorps.

Like all other liberal programs, AmeriCorps is wrought with abuse and spends half its money on bureaucracies and paperwork. Just like their School Lunch Program, which supports bureaucrats instead of feeding hungry children, this volunteer program, intended to provide student aid, funds even more bureaucrats rather than directly aiding students. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the liberals and President Clinton have succeeded in exacerbating the problem of voluntarism by throwing money at it. Their volunteers receive more money and benefits than many of our hard-working citizens. On top of that, the tax dollars funding this program often go to wealthy families, maintaining their elitist pool of feel-gooders instead of inspiring do-gooders. Supporting existing community based groups who already perform charitable duties would incite civic virtue and activism amongst others.

Mr. Speaker, since my warning 2 years ago wasn't enough to discourage my fellow Members from creating another wasteful, bureaucratic program, I would like to offer the following article that appeared in the Hill newspaper as evidence of its failure. "AmeriCorps: Rhetoric vs. Reality" provides justification for rescinding valuable tax dollars from this misguided program.

[From the Hill, Mar. 29, 1995]

AMERICORPS: RHETORIC VS. REALITY

(By Allyson Tucker)

Thanks to a \$1.7 million public relations budget, AmeriCorps, the Clinton administration's national service program created in 1993, remains a sacred cow despite a cost of \$30,400 per "volunteer" and abundant evidence of waste and abuse.

Consider the facts. In 1993-1994 AmeriCorps had about 20,000 "volunteers" who the Clinton administration promised would be working as teachers, doctors and police officers to

help improve communities. The reality, however, is that the majority of these highly paid "volunteers" work in federal or state bureaucracies, government-funded programs or even political action organizations.

For example, more than 2,800 AmeriCorps participants work in federal departments or agencies, including 1,200 in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 525 in the Interior Department, 210 in the U.S. Department of Justice, 135 at the Environmental Protection Agency and 60 at the National Endowment of the Arts.

The federally funded Legal Service Corporation, the chief litigator for the welfare state (which for example, represents drug dealers when they are threatened with eviction from public housing), was awarded 44 AmeriCorps volunteers, cost the U.S. taxpayer \$959,000 plus an additional \$1,242,784 in "matching funds." In San Francisco, the AmeriCorps "Summer of Safety" program organized 40 groups to rally against the federal crime bill's "three strikes and you're out" provision.

More than half of the money spent on AmeriCorps ends up funding bureaucracies and paperwork. 'Educrats' at Northwestern University, for example, were given \$140,000 by AmeriCorps to develop "a plan to complete for more AmeriCorps money next year," without funding a single "volunteer." Similarly, AmeriCorps gave bureaucrats a \$100,000 planning grant to study a volunteer corps in the Virgin Islands and gave the Council of Great City Schools, which is devoted to the "advancement of education in inner-city public schools through public and legislative advocacy," a \$200,000 planning grant. Again, none of this money went to help students pay for college.

Despite the rhetoric, AmeriCorps does little to help working families pay for college. At a 1993-94 price tag of \$155.5 million, about one-tenth of one percent of the 16 million students enrolled in post-secondary education participated in AmeriCorps. Even if Congress expands the program to 150,000 participants by 1997 as the Clinton administration has requested, less than one percent of students will be able to participate.

Furthermore, the majority of the students recruited come from wealthy, not poor or needy, households. The AmeriCorps program is not means-tested (the liberals in Congress defeated conservative efforts to develop a means test). Thus, the children of wealthy and influential people can elbow out poor students for participants in the program. As Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.V.) noted on the Senate floor, instead of sending one AmeriCorp participant (who may or may not need financial assistance) to college, five needy students could qualify for Pell Grants.

Nor does AmeriCorps promote "volunteerism". Each AmeriCorps "volunteer" is paid a \$7,400 stipend and a \$4,750 tuition credit, worth approximately \$7.27 per hour, plus medical benefits and free child care. The total, tax-free AmeriCorps package is worth nearly \$20,000 annually, more than the income of 39.3 million working Americans. The total, non-taxable income of an AmeriCorps "volunteer" exceeds the median income of workers in the private sector, including those with years of experience. The educational benefits also exceed those available to veterans. In addition, at least \$15,000 per

participant goes for overhead and administration.

Worse than President Clinton's good intentions gone awry and the litany of waste and abuse is AmeriCorps' effect on the essence of volunteerism. Private sector community service is thriving. The Labor Department estimates that there are currently three million unpaid volunteers between the ages of 18 and 25, most of whom work for religious organizations, the backbone of community activism.

The laudable goals of AmeriCorps do not match its reality. If the goal is to expand educational opportunity, the AmeriCorps budget would be better spent on direct aid to students. If the goal is to stimulate service, Congress should amend the tax code to allow for tax credits or increased deductions for those who donate their time and money.

## THE HOME RUN READER SUMMER READING PROGRAM

**HON. JIM LIGHTFOOT**

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 4, 1995*

Mr. LIGHTFOOT. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring the Members' attention to a reading program in my district which has done a great deal to motivate young people to read. It seems commonplace to hear about American students who do not meet the strenuous criteria we must require of them. Unfortunately, it is not unusual to hear about young Americans who graduate from high school without adequate reading skills.

This program is sponsored by the Daily Tribune newspaper in Ames, IA, and the Iowa Cubs baseball team and is entitled, appropriately enough, "The Home Run Reader Summer Reading Program." This program was conceived with the sole purpose of helping children discover the pleasure of reading. The program has been successful.

Last year marked the launch of the program and over 5,000 children and 26 libraries in 4 Iowa counties were involved. The students ranged in age from 2 to 16 years of age and read or had read to them an astounding 50,000 books, according to Mary Youngerman, a constituent in my district who served as the coordinator of the program. This summer, the program will span eight counties and its estimated that 12,000 young people will participate.

It is my hope that participating in this program will initiate a love of reading in children that will last them for the rest of their lives. According to Ms. Youngerman, this program was inspired by a similar program in Illinois.

Mr. Speaker, I hope other Members will feel free to contact me if they are interested in developing similar programs in their districts. Hopefully, bringing attention to the Home Run Reader Summer Reading Program will motivate others to get involved at the local level to encourage young people to read and learn.

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