

Serve America Act

Public Law 111-13, April 21, 2009

The Serve America Act amends the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (VISTA). The amendments in this act include significant changes in national service programming and puts more focus on community volunteer programs.

There are major policy, management, administrative, and funding changes in Corporation for National and Community Service Programs: AmeriCorps, VISTA, National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), Learn and Serve America and the Senior Service Corps. The Corporation for National and Community Service may assign “special program functions” to State Service Commissions such as Serve Idaho to increase efficiency.

The foundation of the Serve America Act is built on four major goals:

1. To fulfill the promise to make service a solution for big national problems such as the drop-out crisis and historic unemployment rates
2. To expand opportunities for more Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve
3. To build the capacity of individuals, non-profits, and communities by giving them the tools they need to succeed
4. To embrace innovation by expanding what works and seeding innovative ideas

Policy Highlights:

Additional language in the overall purpose statement to:

- recognize social entrepreneurs
- increase public and private investment in nonprofits
- leverage Federal investments
- expand service-learning
- coordinate citizen service in emergencies or disasters
- increase service opportunities for retiring professionals
- encourage continued service of national service alums
- support colleges that engage students in community service
- encourage service by individuals age 55 and older
- expand the participation of veterans in national service

- focus national service on education, energy conservation, and improving the health status of and economic opportunity for economically disadvantaged individuals

Expansion in the scope of AmeriCorps programs to include programs focusing on:

- access to technology
- disaster services
- mentoring (including provision of supportive services to direct mentoring service organizations as part of a partnership and mentoring of youth in foster care)
- disadvantaged youth
- higher education service-learning
- re-engaging court-involved youth and adults
- financial literacy education
- building affordable housing
- access to health care
- access to State and Federal programs
- e-Corps, job training, job-placement
- reducing crime
- a musician and artist corps program

Addition of five new Service Corps including:

- Education
- Health Futures
- Clean Energy
- Veterans
- Opportunity

Increase in funding for outreach and placement

Expansion of all national service grants

Authorization of a Social Innovation Fund Pilot Program with grants providing seed money and scales up capital for innovative programs

Leveraging private and foundation capital to meet major social challenges

Establishment of a national service program clearinghouse and a Volunteer Generation Fund

Addition of a new nonprofit capacity building fund that will award grants to intermediary nonprofit organizations that support recruitment and management of volunteers (authorizes grants to an intermediary non-profit organization in each state in the amount of not less than \$200,000)

Increased emphasis on evaluation, allocating one percent of funds

Inclusion of volunteer generation outcomes in the grant application

Merging AmeriCorps State Competitive and National Direct funding for grants

The addition of a Call to Service Campaign and the designation of September 11 as a National Day of Service and Remembrance at the Federal Level. State Service Commissions will be asked to lead statewide efforts to commemorate this day.