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Nov. 22, 93 memo to the President Re:

Nat'l. Priorities for National Service

1-3-94

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

P2:3.1

November 22, 1993

~~INFORMATION~~

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

ELI SEGAL *ES**say for the
delay - 1 agree with
B.*

SUBJECT: NATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR NATIONAL SERVICE

- I. **SUMMARY:** We will require that approximately two-thirds of AmeriCorps grants go to programs operating in specific substantive priority areas, to enhance the national identity of your service efforts and to maximize AmeriCorps' impact. The priority areas will be announced in the near future.
- II. **DISCUSSION:** Two goals led us to push for a legislative mandate to establish priority focus areas: (i) having decentralized the system by operating through grants to independent non-profits and others (rather than operating service programs ourselves), we still need a young woman in City Year and a young man in the Delta Service Corps to feel their strong involvement with a common, national effort, associated with your administration; and (ii) focusing our AmeriCorps members' activities maximizes the impact of their efforts, and makes it easier to demonstrate the program's effectiveness to the nation -- it helps us achieve our motto: getting things done.

To a significant extent, therefore, we want AmeriCorps members to address nationally-selected needs, while allowing local programs maximum flexibility to determine how to design their own methods of solving those problems. Accordingly, the legislation calls for the Corporation to establish priorities within four broad issues categories (public safety, education, human needs, and the environment) for approximately two-thirds of our funds.

Therefore, roughly \$100 million in FY '94 (all funds not distributed to the states on the basis of population) will be distributed to programs built around one or more of the priorities (subject to modest waiver provisions).

To identify appropriate priorities, we coordinated with Carol Rasco and the domestic policy staff; consulted with the interagency task force we have set up on service; and conducted extensive outreach, involving more than 850 organizations. After having derived a draft list of priorities, we then solicited comment from key supporters in Congress, the NGA and its key Governors, and others.

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We sought priorities that were one level of specificity deeper than the four broad issues categories, believing that doing so would achieve our goals while still allowing local programs broad initiative. The priorities are as follows:

A. Public safety:

Violence prevention: Providing positive alternatives to violence, drugs and crime. (This could include having AmeriCorps members create safe havens for children, including safe schools, or provide counselling and other services to reduce substance abuse, all with a view toward making children resources, not victims.)

Crime control: Helping make our neighborhoods safe. (Programs will help community policing, including counselling victims, boarding up abandoned buildings, or conducting crime prevention training for the elderly and children.)

B. In education:

School readiness: Furthering early childhood development. (For example, AmeriCorps members might act as teachers' aides in pre-schools; conduct parenting classes for young expectant mothers and fathers; or help with immunization outreach.)

School success: Improving the educational achievement of school-aged children. (This might include coordinating service learning programs, tutoring or mentoring.)

C. Among human needs:

Health: Returning independent living to those in need. (Here, Americorps members might assist in the administration's home health initiatives, including by providing meals and transportation assistance to the elderly, disabled and people living with AIDS.)

Home: Rebuilding neighborhoods and assisting the homeless. (We can anticipate programs renovating and rehabilitating low-income housing, perhaps allying young AmeriCorps members with retired carpenters and other building tradespeople from ACTION's National Senior Volunteer Corps; we can also imagine corps members providing one-stop shopping for homeless families, allowing coordination of available services.)

D. In the environment:

Neighborhood environment: Promoting clean and healthy communities. (This might include neighborhood identification of toxic materials such as lead paint; weatherizing apartments to conserve energy; or reclaiming urban pocket parks.)

Natural environment: Restoring and conserving natural habitats. (AmeriCorps members may clean and protect rivers and streams, or maintain and improve trails on public lands, among other activities.)

Please let us know if you have any thoughts or suggestions on this matter.