

FOIA MARKER

**This is not a textual record. This is used as an
administrative marker by the William J. Clinton
Presidential Library Staff.**

Collection/Record Group: Clinton Presidential Records

Subgroup/Office of Origin: Counsel Office

Series/Staff Member: Marvin Krislov

Subseries:

OA/ID Number: 6741

FolderID:

Folder Title:

Office of National Service - FOIA [Freedom of Information Act] Status [2]: [Briefing Books 4]

Stack:

S

Row:

113

Section:

3

Shelf:

3

Position:

2

The Concept

Our nation needs the active contribution of young people to address the challenges in areas such as conservation, education, drug abuse, emergency responses, and care of the elderly and disabled. Young Americans can improve the quality of life in America providing services not readily available from the labor force. Programs, such as the Peace Corps and at every level of government and throughout the nonprofit sector, have long depended upon the energy and commitment of young volunteers. Beyond serving vital social functions, young volunteers gain experience and skills and become more employable, productive and self-respecting as citizens.

With appropriate leadership rather than bureaucratic control from the federal government, the best of existing youth service programs can be expanded, new initiatives developed, many more young people involved, and volunteer citizen service become an integral part of every young American's experience. Therefore, we propose the creation of a National Youth Service Foundation to provide funding and assistance to enterprises operated through charitable foundations, agencies and programs at the local and state levels.

Guiding Principles

We propose that the new National Youth service Foundation be:

1. Developmental in its approach, encouraging youth service at the elementary and secondary school age level and in colleges and Universities, including programs of full-time service opportunities for young adults;
2. Responsive to community needs identified by local citizens and leaders and coordinated through community-based non-profit organizations;
3. Citizen-directed through volunteer boards of directors including meaningful participation of young people on each board;
4. Inclusive in providing encouragement and support for all youth from all backgrounds and levels of educational achievement;
5. A clearing house for distribution of information about successful locally-conceived volunteer service programs.

The Challenge

Democracy draws its essential strength from citizens helping other citizens. We are a nation built on the foundation of service to others.

At the same time, the fabric of our life together in America today is frayed by illiteracy, drugs, homelessness, and hunger; from dependency arising from disabilities, poverty, and age. Our economic capacity is endangered by having too few qualified workers. Our land, air, and water are in jeopardy. We are too often gripped by selfishness and ignore those in great need.

And yet our nation is blessed with young people, our greatest resource, who with leadership, encouragement, and opportunity can develop a renewed sense of caring for others. Our youth can make a stronger America by serving America, by meeting real needs, by creating a new ethic of service which shall again define what it means to be an American.

The basic principles are as follows:

1. There are a number of needs in U.S. society best met by volunteer service in the manner the Peace Corps has operated.
2. Every young American should have the opportunity to volunteer service to the nation or in his or her community. The concept of a duty to volunteer (as part of the privilege of being an American) should be restored, i.e., West Point's "Duty, honor, country."
3. Youth service not only helps meet public needs in conservation, drug abuse abatement, hospital and elderly care, etc., but helps train, motivate and give valuable qualifications to future citizen leaders.
4. New federal bureaucracy should be avoided. The best vehicle would be a national public corporation to serve as a clearing-house of information on locally initiated programs, using local or state charitable foundations and agencies for the expenditure of funds and operation of programs. Any federal funds should be limited to matching private foundation and local agency funds.

Citizen Service is not a "new idea"; it taps upon the traditional willingness of Americans to participate in their communities. This community spirit is one of the most unique and important aspects of our national character, and it can be traced all the way back to the Mayflower and John Winthrop's "City on a Hill" sermon. Alexis de Tocqueville also commented on it in his landmark examination of America in the early nineteenth century, Democracy in America.

Since 1910, when William James proposed the establishment of a "national service" to meet domestic needs, to infuse the American people with a sense of purpose no less than that found in wartime, there have been many proposals in this area. There have also been Federal programs, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930's, and the Peace Corps, ACTION, and VISTA in more recent times, which have some aspects of national service. Most importantly, during the Reagan Administration there has been a dramatic expansion of voluntary community service throughout the nation, largely at the state and local community levels: there are now more than forty state and local youth corps projects operating full-time, with a combined budget of more than \$100 million, including more than 23,000 young people. Simultaneously, the interest of foundations in studying the possibilities of such efforts has increased, with new academic focus shown by numerous studies and publications, such as Northwestern University Professor Charles Moskos' forthcoming book, National Service in America.

Now is the time to build upon these promising beginnings. A degree of Federal involvement can serve as a catalyzing force -- not by the promulgation of regulations from Washington, but by bringing together the unmet needs of the nation with the genius and enterprise of our people. While Citizen Service would, at least initially, be aimed toward the young, it is foreseeable that other groups, particularly older Americans, would not only be provided services, but would also become active and integral participants in a new era of voluntary community service.

Some politicians look at the growing number of older Americans -- from 28 million today to more than 35 million in the year 2000 -- and think only about budget questions, such as Social Security Cost of Living Adjustments. Those budget questions are of course important, but there is much more to be considered. What I see in older Americans is a tremendous resource just waiting to be tapped. Citizen Service will mean not only that some of the 3 to 4 million young Americans turning 18 in each of the next decade will be able to provide voluntary services for older Americans, but also that the young will learn from their elders -- both from the seniors they serve, and from the seniors who can teach them through voluntary community service of their own.

The potential benefits to the nation from such an interaction cannot be calculated in dollars and cents, and should be catalyzed, not directed, from Washington. I hope that Citizen Service will empower individuals in both groups to unleash a new spirit of community across America.