



STATE OF VERMONT
SENATE CHAMBER

VERMONT LEGISLATURE STANDS UP FOR NATIONAL SERVICE

Unanimously passes joint resolution opposing cuts to AmeriCorps*NCCC

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[Montpelier] The Vermont Legislature last week became the first state in the nation to speak out against cutting a celebrated federal AmeriCorps program that provides essential help to Vermont's nonprofit service community and the many deserving communities they serve.

Introduced by state Senator Matt Dunne, Joint Resolution 59 passed both houses of the legislature by unanimous voice votes. The resolution was sent to Washington this week as Congress begins further discussions on funding national service programs. [See full text of resolution below.]

"Vermonters are passionate about national service," said Dunne, former director of the AmeriCorps*VISTA program under both Presidents Clinton and Bush. "Vermont and the nation have benefited from the incredible work that the NCCC program provides. Over a thousand young people have given back to their country every year by providing disaster relief, building houses for Habitat for Humanity, repairing trails, and rehabilitating shelters. I have witnessed the huge amount an NCCC team can accomplish in six short weeks is nothing short of amazing. NCCC and all AmeriCorps programs leverage a small taxpayer investment into an enormously effective program."

Modeled on the CCC programs established during the Great Depression, National Community Conservation Corps (NCCC) is one of three divisions in the federal AmeriCorps program. AmeriCorps*VISTA and AmeriCorps*State and National Grants are the other two programs.

Under the NCCC, teams of 18-24 year-old Americans are selected to serve for 10 months at a base site where they receive intensive training in construction, team work, disaster relief, conservation techniques, and skills for working with at-risk children. From these bases, they conduct 6-week "spikes" in a local community, infusing well-coordinated energy to a partner organization to accomplish a specific goal.

The DREAM Program, Inc., (www.dreamprogram.org) a Vermont-based nonprofit that coordinates mentoring and support programs for college students working with children living in subsidized housing communities, is one of NCCC's several Vermont partners. DREAM co-founder Mike Foote strongly praised the Legislature's stance.

"Though we felt creating a summer camp was necessary to meet the needs of our children, it was an immense undertaking," said Foote. "NCCC volunteers built the necessary infrastructure to

open Camp DREAM. NCCC is the main reason we are able to offer these Vermont children the quality and extent of programming that we do now. The children love being around them too, and learn a lot. Because of NCCC's hard work, we are years ahead of where we would have been."

NCCC provides another invaluable asset. They are flexible and on-call to provide disaster relief for our nation. NCCC teams are currently assisting federal agencies in the Gulf states.

Dunne's resolution is in response to recent news from Washington that Congress is considering deep cuts in the AmeriCorps budget for 2007, including the complete elimination of the NCCC.

As the Congressional committees consider funding for national service programs in early April, Senator Dunne is planning a visit to Capitol Hill to advocate for full funding of all AmeriCorps programs. "Since Katrina, young people are standing up and telling us they want to give back. Our country clearly sees the many critical needs we have in our nation." Dunne said. "Now is the time to expand opportunities for young people to serve, not eliminate great programs like the NCCC."

For more information about AmeriCorps*NCCC and the campaign to restore its funding, go to:
<http://www.voicesforservice.org/>

TEXT OF Joint Resolution 59

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/database/status/summary.cfm?Bill=JRS059&Session=2006>

By Senator Dunne,

J.R.S. 59. Joint resolution urging Congress to continue funding AmeriCorps*NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps).

Whereas, AmeriCorps is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CCNS) designed to enable Americans of all ages and backgrounds to give back to their nation through a commitment to national service, and

Whereas, an essential component of the AmeriCorps triad of national service programs, which also includes AmeriCorps*Vista and AmeriCorps*State and National, is AmeriCorps*NCCC, and

Whereas, AmeriCorps*NCCC's mission is "to strengthen communities and develop leaders through direct, team-based national and community service," and

Whereas, AmeriCorps*NCCC is modeled on the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps and the United States military, and it is premised "on the belief that civic responsibility is an inherent duty of all citizens," and

Whereas, five regional campus located in Perry Point, Maryland; Denver, Colorado; Washington, D.C.; Charleston, South Carolina; and Sacramento, California, serve as home base for the volunteers who must make an intensive 10-month commitment, and

Whereas, volunteers are assigned to teams, and after completing their training, the teams are sent to work on intensive short-term projects within their regions under the auspices of local and national nonprofit organizations, schools, municipalities, national and state parks, and Indian tribes, and

Whereas, the team projects include tutoring students, constructing and rehabilitating low-income housing, responding to natural disasters, cleaning up streams, helping communities develop emergency plans, and addressing many other community needs, and on the belief that civic responsibility is an inherent duty of all citizens

Whereas, in announcing the 2007 CCNS budget, the President has proposed to eliminate AmeriCorps*NCCC, and

Whereas, this unwarranted budget cut would abandon a program that has brought untold benefits to communities across the country and enabled thousands of Americans to serve their nation in a most constructive manner, and

Whereas, although CCNS President David Eisner has indicated that the disaster response activities will be assumed in other CCNS programs, they were not designed to perform these critical tasks that are ideally suited for AmeriCorps*NCCC's specially trained teams, and

Whereas, in Vermont, the Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council, the Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at the Austine School, ARC of Central Vermont and New Hampshire Valley, the City of Winooski, and the Vermont Department of Veterans' Affairs have had teams assigned to their organizations, and

Whereas, another Vermont recipient of AmeriCorps*NCCC's services has been Dream Program Incorporated, a nonprofit corporation for which AmeriCorps*NCCC volunteer teams have tutored and mentored youth, organized communities, and developed trails and major infrastructure facilities at its camp for low-income youngsters, and

Whereas, the story of AmeriCorps*NCCC can be retold by hundreds of other nonprofit organizations nationwide, and

Whereas, the continuation of AmeriCorps*NCCC is essential for both the beneficiaries and the volunteers who derive an especially meaningful life's experience from their participation, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly urges Congress to continue funding at a reasonable level the AmeriCorps*NCCC program for 2007, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the President of the United States, to Corporation for National Service President David Eisner, and to the members of the Vermont Congressional delegation.