



**Statement to the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service  
Stennis Center for Public Service  
November 2019**

The Stennis Center for Public Service is an independent, legislative branch agency created by Congress in 1988 to promote and strengthen public service in the United States. The Stennis Center works to improve the performance of those in all levels of government and to encourage young people to consider public service careers. Its mission is three-fold:

- To increase awareness of the importance of public service, to foster among the youth of the U.S. greater recognition and understanding of the role of public service in the development of the U.S., and to promote public service as a career choice;
- To provide training and development opportunities for state and local elected government officials and employees of state and local governments in order to assist such officials and employees to become more effective and more efficient in performing their public duties and develop their potential for accepting increased public service opportunities, and;
- To provide training and development opportunities for those employees of Members of Congress who perform key roles in helping Members of Congress serve the people of the U.S.

The Stennis Center is governed by a Board of Trustees appointed by Democratic and Republican leaders in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. Products of the Stennis Center include conferences, seminars, special projects, and training and development programs.

It has been the experience of the Stennis Center that most people develop an appreciation for public service when they are able to go “behind the scenes” and learn what public servants do on a day-to-day basis. For example, for more than three decades the Stennis Center has brought people from all age groups and from across the nation to Washington, D.C., to engage directly with Members of Congress and their staff. Though these events oftentimes only span a day, an overwhelming majority of participants come away with a better appreciation and understanding of Congress as an institution. This direct, “show – do not tell” approach to civic engagement has been applied to a number of Stennis Center programs throughout its 30-year history, including at the local and state levels, and is instrumental in helping the Stennis Center meet its statutory mission. As such, the Stennis Center believes that this model should be incorporated into any new initiatives proposed by the Commission on National, Military, and Public Service.

It is equally as valuable to take a direct, “show – do not tell” approach when it comes to fostering a sense of civic responsibility among our nation’s youth. This is why the Stennis Center has created the newly formed *Stennis Service Corps* (SSC), a “learn by doing” approach to public service. The SSC will encourage national service and volunteerism and will promote public service as a career choice for students across America. Key components of SSC will include: (1) secondary and post-secondary students, in addition to college students, contributing at least 50 hours of community service annually, which will be documented and tracked in a service database, and; (2) a public service scholarship that places college students in government

agencies at all levels, in addition to non-profit organizations. The Stennis Service Scholarship will support opportunities for college students to engage in public service across the U.S. during the summer and will include a \$5,000 stipend. Students must participate in SSC in order to be eligible to become a Stennis Service Scholar.