



programs, members are then you know, individuals are deciding to serve in these programs. So that's an exciting opportunity, I think.

Another one in terms of early introduction is there was talk about, you know, at what point during school to introduce service. We have an AmeriCorps program with a school district here,

Amarillo Independent School District. They have a program designed around using high school seniors as tutors in their elementary schools. It's been a really exciting program to see.

Obviously, this is 45 high school seniors. Trying to scale that on a national or statewide level, there's some barriers there. But I think there's something there to explore and see different ways to use that. That program, in addition to those students that are serving as members serving in these elementary schools, they're also taking a class as part of their high school curriculum on career readiness and service learning as well. So, I think there are some opportunities there.

And then the last thing I wanted to mention, as we talked about different ways of engaging the idea of a summer a term of summer service came up. Of our portfolio, we have 3,200 members that serve every year in our state; about a quarter of those are summer term positions. And so, we have several programs that have really looked at this model of using a term of service over the summer specifically for engaging, typically, high school seniors or college students as well. And so, I know that it came up getting the service bug. This seems to be a great way to engage them early in a lifetime of service.

Dr. Joseph Heck

Great. Thank you so much for your comment and for being here today.

Ms. Jaclyn Kolar

Thank you.



Ms. Sonia Hernandez

Hi. Good morning, Chairman and Commissioners. My name is Sonia Hernandez. I've been with AmeriCorps for three terms, and I've been deployed four times throughout the United States and United States territories.

So, my comment was, since I've been deployed four times, I've noticed a lack of diversity, not only through women of color but through genders as well. And you guys were talking about how we can get more diverse people into the program.

In Austin there is a program for the Park Ranger Cadet program, and we just had a summit for them yesterday and a lot of that program is out of one high school in Austin and some of those students' Interior America program and Conservation World, and some of those alumns go back into the park parks program. And I know that that helped out because there was alumns through the Texas Conservation program going onwards.

Also, I know that within my culture, going back to the community is kind of seen as a privilege and also kind of a culture construct, where it's a privilege to work in the community and to do your service, to even go to parks sometimes because you have to pay for it. And growing up for me, I know I wasn't able to do that, but now giving back into the AmeriCorps program, I'm able to visit these parks that I wasn't allowed to.

So, as we hopefully rebrand the AmeriCorps label, we need to reconstruct the effects of giving back to the community and seeing that it's it also helps us as an individual and as our environment.

Also, increasing the living stipend and taking the taxation away from the ed award because I just did my taxes for the first time as AmeriCorps, and I didn't realize I had to pay back a little bit. So, I know you can only give some certain amount without giving paying back, and the living stipend doesn't always give me that amount to pay back with living stably.



And also, just maybe as rebranding, giving a day where it's like a park free day or out day where some of the parks that we have to pay for are free and that people who are in different culturally diverse communities be able to experience this, and not see it as so much as a privilege but as a way to just grow. Thank you.

Dr. Joseph Heck

Thank you.

Mr. Parc Smith

All right. Thank you, Commission and Commissioners, for having this hearing today. We're honored to be a part of this discussion.

My name is Parc Smith. I'm with the American YouthWorks and the Texas and Louisiana Conservation Corps doing disaster relief and conservation work across our nation's public lands, and we also run a YouthBuild program.

And so, 24 years I've been involved in national service, since really the beginning of AmeriCorps. I was involved in this program, and now I'm CEO, and I'm getting to see how this plays out across the nation.

What's been phenomenal to me to see is the opportunity that we have been able to create particularly for opportunity youth, where young people who don't really have a clear career path, may not have even completed their high school diploma, can come through a program like YouthBuild, can get connected to education, but can find their own self-worth through service to their community.

When you ask a young person to do something significant for others, to really step beyond themselves, sometimes they're worried about where they're going to sleep tonight, how they're going to kind of keep food on the table in their own homes.



But continuing to look at the national service model and inserting flexibility into the completion dates, as AnnMaura Connolly was mentioning earlier, finding ways to incentivize programs to work with more challenged youth populations we've seen so many of these young people, they've completed their education. They've moved on. They've done service. They've moved on to college when they didn't think they had an opportunity to go to college. The AmeriCorps ed award really removes that barrier and breaks down that door so they can step in.

Beyond that, they then move into career pathways, many into public service. A lot of our YouthBuild members have moved into military service, and but then the public service side is going on to become wildland firefighters, moving into emergency management jobs with the counties and cities with which we've partnered in these communities when disasters happen.

So, this stream that you guys are having this conversation of all three types of service and how it improves our country, it's a really important conversation, and I applaud you for really spending so much time on this effort for these past two years. Thank you for your work.

Dr. Joseph Heck

Thank you. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Joshua Winata

Good morning. My name is Joshua Winata. I'm communications officer with OneStar Foundation.

I just wanted to there's been a lot of discussion today about promoting and raising awareness about AmeriCorps national service on the national stage, and so I just wanted to acknowledge one of the challenges as someone who has been trying to promote national service on the Texas level, is especially when you're looking at kind of the larger scale, is that national service represents a diversity of issues, and the experience looks very different depending on the



program. You could be sitting with a student. You could be making spreadsheets. You could be building a trail. And as a result, it is very different to kind of succinctly promote, and you often end up with a very fragmented image of what national service can be and when it comes to promoting and marketing national service.

CNCS, Service Year, the state commissions have all done a really great job of putting together some very beautiful campaigns that show the impact of service overall and build kind of excitement for service. But one thing that especially speaking with a lot of members is national service is really just a vessel. It's and there's kind of a lot of mental jumps to make from, you know, that it's not so much that they're enamored with the idea of national service; it's that they care about a specific issue.

And so, one thing I just wanted to propose to this commission, as you guys are developing your recommendations around prompting national service, is to have a very kind of targeted marketing strategy. I really like the idea of working with ideas of higher education with institutions of higher education, to work with specific majors, because it really is kind of the issue-based marketing that you also get a lot of results with.

And also, to continue offering training and technical assistance to local programs. A lot of the recruitment does have to come from a local level so that they can kind of generate interest around specific issues.

And finally, just really focus on storytelling. I think a lot of it has been very ambiguous in general about what service is but focusing on individual stories that let people see what service looks like.

So, thank you all for your time.



Thank you. I again want to thank our panelists for providing their testimony today and all those in the audience who took the time to attend today's proceedings. It is only with your help and input that the commission will achieve its vision of every American inspired and eager to serve.

There being no further business before the commission, this hearing is adjourned.

[Bangs gavel at 1137.]

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