

National Service: A Chronology

1906

American philosopher William James outlines his vision for national service in his essay “The Moral Equivalent of War.”

1933

President Franklin D. Roosevelt creates the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which over the next decade provides millions of young men the chance to serve six to 18 months helping themselves and their families while restoring the nation’s parks and revitalizing the economy.

1944

The GI Bill (officially the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944) is signed into law, providing millions of veterans of World War II the opportunity to go to college in return for service to their country.

1960s

Demonstration projects are launched for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program (collectively known today as Senior Corps).

1960-1961

Democratic presidential candidate John F. Kennedy proposes establishment of the Peace Corps on Oct. 14, 1960. After his election, Congress authorizes it on Sept. 22, 1961.

1964

President Lyndon B. Johnson creates VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America).

1965

College Work Study programs are established, providing new opportunities for students to work their way through college while serving their community.

1976

California Gov. Jerry Brown establishes the California Conservation Corps, the first state-based youth service corps.

February 1988

Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) delivers a speech and hosts a panel on national service at the Democratic Leadership Council’s (DLC) annual conference in Williamsburg, Va. The conference introduces the national service concept to Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton.

April 1988

The DLC publishes the book *Citizenship and National Service*, by Will Marshall, providing an analysis of the need for national service and outlining a comprehensive national service proposal.

October 1988

The DLC sponsors a two-week National Service tour featuring Democratic vice presidential nominee Lloyd Bentsen, Sens. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), J. Bennett Johnston (D-La.), and Nunn, Rep. Mike Espy (D-Miss.), future Maryland Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, and Northwestern University sociologist Charles Moskos.

1990

President George H.W. Bush signs the National and Community Service Act of 1990 into law, providing grants to schools to support service-learning and demonstration grants for national service programs.

October 1991

Former DLC chairman Clinton launches his presidential campaign with a Georgetown University speech in which he calls for a “new

covenant" and the establishment of a voluntary system of national service.

September 1993

Congress passes the National and Community Service Trust Act, based on President Clinton's proposal, establishing the Corporation for National and Community Service and AmeriCorps.

September 1994

The first class of 25,000 AmeriCorps members begins its year of service. Four National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) campuses open in Aberdeen, Md.; Charleston, S.C.; Denver; and San Diego.

November 2001

Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.), DLC chairman, and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) introduce the Call to Service Act, which would dramatically expand the scope of national service.

January 2002

In his State of the Union Message, President George W. Bush calls on every American to devote 4,000 hours to service during his or her lifetime. He also proposes to expand AmeriCorps by 50 percent to increase the opportunities for service.

December 2002

Congress passes a defense authorization bill for fiscal 2003 that includes a short-term "citizen soldier" enlistment program drawn from the Bayh-McCain bill. This option allows volunteers to serve their country in uniform without pursuing a military career.

Fall 2003

Democratic presidential candidates Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.), and Gen. Wesley Clark make expanding national service a key element of their campaigns, elevating it for the first time to one of the major issues in the Democratic primary debate.

January 2004

AmeriCorps receives record funding to grow to 75,000 members.