



June 27, 2003

President Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to you to express strong support for the AmeriCorps program. The United States Conference of Mayors is opposed to any cuts to this valued community service program, which has provided a variety of benefits and made tremendous differences in communities all across the country.

I would like to applaud you for the commitment that you made to volunteerism in your 2002 State of the Union address and the establishment of Freedom Corps. I also commend you for the commitment to increase the level of funding to AmeriCorps in the FY 2004 budget proposal to increase the number of volunteers from 50,000 to 75,000.

United States' cities have been able to profit from the power of promise and commitment of over one and a half million every day citizens and traditional volunteers through service in the Corporation for National Service programs like AmeriCorps. Through this program the focus has been on the needs of children and youth in American cities through teaching, tutoring, mentoring, organizing after-school programs, community policing, and creating safe havens; building affordable housing; and helping with homeland security. Community service programs like AmeriCorps provide opportunities for young people to serve, have a sense of purpose and pride, and the ability to give back to their communities and country.

As I am sure you are aware, under the State Competitive grants the Corporation of National Service has announced a slash in funding, which would result in the ability to fund only 18 percent (2,036) of the current volunteers. The drastic cuts will mean the loss of volunteers at an average of 80 percent and up to 16 states will be closed out of funding completely. The cut backs are reportedly due to the mismanagement and accounting by the Corporation of National Service. Those Americans who want to serve their communities and country should not be penalized for infrastructure and administrative mismanagement.

I understand that you are planning to request a supplemental appropriations bill. I would strongly urge you to include the AmeriCorps program in this request. Not providing the funding for one of the most prominent community service programs will be a devastating loss to the program itself and an ultimate loss to the citizens and cities across this great country.

Sincerely,

James A. Garner
President
Mayor
Hempstead, New York