



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

WR -
NAT. SERVICE

March 28, 1994

To: Bruce Reed
From: Joel Berg
Subject: Combining National Service and Welfare Reform

10 pages, including this cover

Attached is a draft proposal outlining how USDA is considering a pilot project in the Mississippi Delta to combine national service and welfare reform.

I'd really appreciate your feed-back on whether these ideas are good, crazy, or just need some work.

I will call to follow-up in a few days but you can reach me at 720-6350.

I've also sent a copy to HH and to Will Marshall for comments.

Hope all is well. (After all, baseball season is soon).

Draft March 24, 1994

PROPOSAL FOR MISSISSIPPI DELTA AMERICORPS/USDA TEAMS

This proposal details a program through which AmeriCorps participants in the Mississippi Delta would work to fight hunger and bolster nutrition, improve the local environment, boost the local rural economy, and reform the welfare system. Some of the participants would be AFDC participants themselves - the program would provide them with the skills and resources they would need to empower themselves to move towards self-sufficiency.

Costs and Number of Participants

The first component would be two youth service teams of 50 participants each, composed of a mix of AFDC recipients, college students, and recent high school graduates. Each participant would receive a yearly salary of \$7,400, health insurance, child care if they have children, and an educational scholarship of \$4,725 that can be used for college, graduate school, trade school, or an approved apprenticeship program. One team of 50 participants would focus on work on public lands and the environment. The other team would focus on work on anti-hunger, nutrition education, and empowerment initiatives. Including administrative costs and overhead, each participant would cost USDA and/or our partners an average of \$15,000 per year. Thus, each 50-participant team would cost \$750,000 per year. Both teams together would cost \$1.5 million per year.

The second component would be a 40 person rural development team, composed of college graduates and professional school graduates. Each participant would receive a yearly salary of \$15,000, health insurance, child care if they have children, and an educational scholarship of \$4,725 that can be used for college, graduate school, trade school or an approved apprenticeship program. Fifteen members of this team would supervise the younger participants in the other two teams; the remaining 25 team members would plan and carry out broader empowerment, welfare reform, rural development, and environmental protection programs throughout the Mississippi Delta. Including administrative costs and overhead, each participant would cost USDA and/or our partners an average of \$20,000 per year. Thus, 40 participants would cost \$1 million per year.

Thus, all three teams, engaging a total of 140 participants in service, would cost \$2.5 million yearly.

Combining Welfare Reform and Community Service

This model would be unique because the welfare recipients in the program would both perform and receive service.

This model rejects the failed and stale ideologies of both the far left and far right. It rejects the conservative notion that poor people are basically lazy, and that if they are thrown off welfare they will somehow be able to magically find jobs for themselves. But it also rejects the traditional liberal approach of simply spending more money on a broken system that only leaves welfare recipients on an endless treadmill.

Instead, this model focuses on helping participants gain for themselves both the work ethic and the economic tools needed to succeed.

The AFDC recipients — like all the participants in this program — would be providing critical service to the people of the Mississippi Delta. This experience would be empowering in and of itself by transforming these participants from clients passively being supported by government into community activists providing service to others. As currently demonstrated by existing youth service corps, this change can be a transforming experience for welfare recipients, stripping away their stigma and replacing it with a new and powerful understanding of their own power to help themselves and their community. By working alongside and completing exactly the same tasks as college students, the participants will come to realize they too can set higher personal goals.

Yet this program will provide AFDC recipients with much more than increased self-esteem and a structured work regimen: they will receive services, training, counseling, income, and educational benefits that would allow them to move off of welfare and towards self-sufficiency. Specifically, each participant on AFDC will receive the following material benefits:

- * \$7,400 base salary yearly
- * Free health insurance with a guaranteed set of minimum benefits
- * Free day care for their children
- * \$4,725 educational voucher for each year of service
- * Up-front, general, training on citizenship, work skills, and teamwork
- * Up-front, technical, training for each work project
- * Free classes to obtain G.E.D. degrees
- * Ongoing educational classes on environmental and anti-hunger issues
- * Help with transportation to the work sites
- * Ongoing counseling on their personal and economic problems
- * Substance abuse counseling, if needed
- * Job counseling and placement services

Empowerment Tools Provided to the Participants

Ten of the Rural Development Team members will serve as crew leaders for the Environmental Team and the Anti-Hunger Team. Thus each crew of 10 participants will have one Rural Development Team member, who will be a college graduate or a professional school graduate, as a crew leader.

The crew leaders will plan projects, supervise projects, and work alongside the members of each crew. The crew leaders will also be specially selected and trained to serve as caseworkers for the AFDC recipients on their team.

Since each crew leaders/case workers will have no more than five AFDC recipients under their personal direction, they will have plenty of time to work with each person to help solve their individual problems.

The other five Rural Development team members will focus on providing the following services to the participants and the region-at-large.

1) **Training, Education, Counseling** - This team member will focus on coordinating specific job training, general education and G.E.D. classes, environmental and nutrition education, interview training, and personal counseling.

2) **Job Placement Services** - This team member will work with program participants and other community residents to try to match up their skills and interests with available jobs in the region.

3) **Assets Development** - This team member would work with local banks, local government agencies, and local non-profit agencies to create a pilot project in which money saved by program participants would be matched by another source and kept in a special savings account.

4) **Microenterprise Development** - This team member would work with participants and other area residents to help them obtain small loans to start microenterprise projects. Microenterprise is a development strategy in which small loans, peer support, and technical assistance are made available to those starting "small" small businesses. Such small business are usually capitalized under \$5,000, employ less than five people, and tend to be in the retail or service sector, yet they can play a critical role in breaking the cycle of dependency on government programs and help individuals build assets while moving towards self-sufficiency.

5) **Apprenticeship Creation** - This team member would work with participants, regional businesses, local educational institutions, and other local residents to create opportunities for regional business to sponsor apprenticeships for young people to train for real jobs while continuing their studies.

USDA Staff Support

This project will also have at least ten full-time USDA and state extension system employees detailed to help run it. Some possible detailees:

- 1) **FNS Feeding Program Policy Expert** - Will work to coordinate the interface between the anti-hunger teams, state welfare agencies, and federal feeding programs.
- 2) **Agricultural Research Service Nutrition Education Specialist** - A former HNIS employee will work with the Anti-hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Team to provide nutrition education.
- 3) **F616 Outreach Worker** - Would incorporate food safety curriculum into work of anti-hunger team.
- 4) **Extension Agent in Nutrition** - Will work to develop and implement curriculum in anti-hunger corps.
- 5) **Extension Agent in Small Farming** - Will teach participants and others how to grow their own food and provide agricultural education.
- 6) **Extension Agent in 4-H** - Will coordinate program with local 4-H youth programs and provide environmental education.
- 7) **Extension Agent in Small Farming** - Will teach participants and others how to grow their own food and provide agricultural education.
- 8) **Soil Conservation Service Soil Expert** - Will provide technical assistance for environmental team members and will provide environmental education.
- 9) **Soil Conservation Service Rural Development Expert** - Will coordinate interface with local RC&D programs.
- 10) **Soil Conservation Service Earth Team Coordinator** - A SCS employee with a proven track record of success in coordinating volunteer efforts will help incorporate part-time volunteers into the efforts of the environmental team.
- 11) **ASCS Sustainable Agriculture or Beginning Farming Expert** - Will coordinate sustainable agriculture projects and facilitate participation in USDA beginning farmer programs.

12) Forest Service State and Private Forestry Expert- Will supervise tree-plantings in towns.

13) AMS Farmers Market Specialist - Will work with team members to open farmers markets in poor small towns and allow local small farmers or gardeners to sell their goods.

14) AMS Organic Standards Specialist - Will work with team members to help explain new organic standards regulations.

15) ARS Sustainable Agriculture Expert - Would work with team members to implement local sustainable agriculture projects.

16) FCIC Underwriting Expert - Will work with team members to help explain to area farmers the provision in the crop insurance regulations.

17) FmHA Loan Expert- Will help participants and other area residents apply for loans and provide general outreach on USDA programs.

18) FmHA Housing Expert- Will coordinate rural housing renovations, implementation of inventory property program, home ownership counseling, and pilot programs to build homes out of straw.

19) RDA District Water Loan Specialist - Would work with team members to conduct environmental assessments communities need to perform before building new water systems.

20) RDA Economic Planning Expert - Would work with team members to provide general economic strategic planning for communities and regions.

21) REA Business Development Expert - Would work to help develop small businesses regionally.

22) REA Telecommunications Expert Provide technical assistance to allow rural areas to link up to the Information Superhighway and other modern telecommunications.

USDA Administrative Support

The National Finance Center will provide payroll for the participants and the management team.

The Office of Personnel will provide support in hiring, detailing, and evaluation.

The Office of Information and Resources Management will provide assistance in creating and maintaining a computer network and bulletin board for the program.

The Office of Operations will help obtain and maintain office space.

Where The Program Would Operate

The program would operate in the following counties of Mississippi: Desoto, Tunica, Panola, Coahoma, Bolivar, Quitman, Tallahatchie, Leflore, Washington, Sunflower, Carroll, Sharkey, Holmes, Humphreys, Yazoo, Warren, Issaquena, Claiborne, and Jefferson.

The program would operate in the following counties of Arkansas: Crittenden, Lee, Phillips, Desha, and Chicot.

The program would operate in the following counties of Louisiana: East Carroll, West Carroll, Madison, Tangipahoa, and Concordia.

Rural Development Team

The Rural Development team would consist of 40 college graduates or professional school graduates with specific training in rural development issues. Fifteen team members would be assigned directly to work with the Environmental and Public lands team and the Anti-Hunger and Empowerment team. The remaining 25 participants would assist communities in identifying needs and resources necessary for economic well-being. The participants would have diverse education and training and would be matched up with individual communities or regions that have specific needs that can be filled by someone with that specific background. The need to develop new leadership in rural America was a continuing theme of Secretary Espy's recent Rural Development Forum. Americorps/USDA Rural Development Team can help redress that need by playing a major role in developing that leadership.

We will make a concerted effort to recruit participants who want to return to areas similar to those in which they were raised. Thus, this program can help begin reversing the "brain drain" from rural America. The goal is for as many Rural Development Team members as possible to be hired eventually by their host communities.

Individuals will be placed in communities or areas where their particular talents can be best utilized. Experts in connecting rural homes to municipal water systems will be matched up to areas with that need. Experts in tourism will be matched up with communities that want to develop their tourism. Experts in sustainable agriculture will be matched up with groups of farmers who need technical assistance in that area. Experts in grant writing will be matched up with communities that need grant writing. Experts in attracting small businesses will be matched up with communities that want to attract more small business.

Experts in watershed protection will be matched up with areas that need such help. General planners would also be matched up with communities that need to develop overall economic plans.

This group of individuals would be able to assist communities in planning and prioritizing efforts. The corps would then assist the community in locating financial resources, preparing proposals, designing educational programs, and implementing strategies necessary for revitalization. The focus would be on the community generating its own vision for the future and the USDA corps assisting them in creating and attaining that vision. Some possible job descriptions:

- 1) **Assistant State Rural Development Coordinator** - Assists USDA State Rural Development Coordinators in helping boost Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities. Collects data, provides outreach, coordinates community resources, helps develop strategic plans, helps implement the program, analyzes local data for agencies and organizations so that the needs of the under-served are considered.
- 2) **Small Business Plan Developer and Information Broker** - Assists in the assessment and development of niche markets.
- 3) **Regional Circuit Rider** - Works part time in a number of towns in a region. Provides technical assistance to communities throughout a region in brokering, strategic planning, and community assessment.
- 4) **Sustainable Agriculture Advisor** - Works with farmers in the region to help them develop model sustainable agriculture farms. Directs 4-H volunteers to perform some of the labor intensive work, such as fence building, needed for successful sustainable farming.

5) Watershed Assistance Process Facilitator - Work to coordinate local watershed protection programs in order to save wetlands, guard drinking water quality, and prevent flooding. The team member would explain watershed assistance programs, identify key potential participants in local watershed steering committees, arrange local organizational meetings, and facilitate the identification of watershed needs, problems, and concerns.

6) Natural Resource Specialist - Under the direction of a Soil Conservation Service professional employee, the team member will work in low-income and socially disadvantaged areas to assist in the acceleration of watershed protection, work with field engineers in the design and layout of community projects, and work with the local Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Coordinator for economic development for disadvantaged groups.

7) Landscape Architect - The team member will work with soil conservation districts, RC&D councils, and area conservationists to coordinate and include landscape architectural planning for the purpose of maintaining, enhancing, or restoring ecological, social, and economic conditions.

8) Farm-a-Syst Coordinator - Will work with local farmers to conduct environmental and groundwater assessments of their farmsteads.

9) Regional 4-H Youth Development Coordinator - The team member will work with county Extension agents and 4-H coordinators to manage local students involved in youth service.

10) SCS Volunteer Coordinators - The team member will recruit and supervise adult and youth volunteers from local communities to work on Soil Conservation Service projects.

11) Microenterprise Promoter - Team members will work with local banks, community development agencies, and interested individuals in starting or expanding microenterprise programs.

12) Rural Housing Renovator - Team member will direct the work of Environment and Public Lands team members and other volunteers in renovating rural housing.

13) USDA Program Outreach Worker - Team member will provide outreach to citizens on USDA loan programs, beginning farmer programs, minority business opportunities, etc.

14) **Apprenticeship Coordinator** - Team member will work with local businesses, national foundations, state government, and local school districts to build partnerships to run apprenticeship programs.

15) **Community Development Bank Promoter** - Will provide technical assistance to organizations desiring to create rural community development banks.

Environment and Public Lands Team

The 50 Public Lands and Environment Team members would renovate state and local parks, plant trees in towns and other areas, teach environmental education, help beginning farmers, test water quality, help renovate rural housing, boost sustainable agriculture, clean-up rivers and lakes, help families weatherize their homes, instruct the public on how to dispose of household chemicals, and restore wetlands.

Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Team

In the Anti-Hunger/Empowerment Team, the 50 participants would work to help low-income families and individuals move towards self-sufficiency. The main focus of the team would be fighting domestic hunger. Team members could help individuals apply for food stamps, Women, Infants, and Children, and the school breakfast program; overhaul their diets; learn to prevent foodborne illnesses; and obtain the expanded Earned Income Tax Credits, microenterprise loans, and help from community development banks. In short, this team would help put into effect the entire empowerment agenda promoted by President Clinton and Secretary Espy.

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NAT. SERVICE

December 18, 1993

MEMORANDUM FOR BRUCE REED

FROM: RICK ALLEN *RA*

SUBJECT: NOMENCLATURE FOR WELFARE REFORM AND REQUIRED
EMPLOYMENT

We have discussed internally your suggestion that we propose an alternative description (rather than community service) for a job with a governmental or non-profit entity, required at the conclusion of the maximum permitted period of public assistance. We appreciate your sensitivity to our desire to distinguish voluntary service, under the President's national service initiative, from required conduct (whether for those on welfare or as part of alternative sentencing).

We propose that mandated activities be termed "community jobs" -- we want to get away from the use of "service". For our part, we intend to try to avoid using "community service" too, in favor of "national service" for the types of stipended, largely full-time activities constituting AmeriCorps, and the "ethic of service" to describe the full range of voluntary activities. ✓

It will obviously take a while to begin to change the public's use of these terms, and the distinctions may be too small to penetrate most discourse, but we would like to give it a try and at least avoid making matters worse. Please call me with your reaction (606-5294).

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 30, 1994

MEMORANDUM FOR BRUCE REED
DAVID ELLWOOD
MARY JO BANE

FROM: ELIJ. SEGAL *E. S.*
SUBJECT: USE OF "COMMUNITY SERVICE" IN WELFARE REFORM
DRAFT PROPOSAL

The Corporation for National Service is supportive of the Working Group in its efforts to transform the Nation's welfare system, and we are appreciative of the role we have been afforded in the process thus far. I am particularly hopeful that AmeriCorps, the President's national service initiative, can help play a part in the prevention strategy, especially as it relates to the prevention of teen pregnancy. My staff will be working closely with you on that front.

As you now move to the stage of drafting legislation and packaging the reform proposal for submission to Congress, I wanted to again express my concern about the use of the term "community service" in describing the mandatory, subsidized employment requirements for welfare recipients who reach their time limit on AFDC (i.e., the WORK program). The draft proposal of February 26th notes that the proposed reform plan "limits cash assistance to two years, and then requires work, preferably in the private sector, *but in community service jobs if necessary.*" And later, it notes that a major theme for the proposal is "work for those who exhaust their time limit," whereby those who are unable to find work at the end of two years "will be required to work in a private sector, *community service* or public sector job." I recommend that all references to community service (as related to the WORK program) be dropped from the proposal (and any potential draft legislation) and that "community jobs" or "subsidized jobs in community-based organizations" be used instead.

This recommendation is more than cosmetic. Already we have received calls from the press who, having obtained copies of the draft proposal, want to know whether the President's national service program will be serving as the principal placement mechanism for welfare recipients who reach their time limit. Clearly, the connection is already being made (and the potential for further connection is greatly enhanced as the proposal will likely be debated in Congress precisely during the launch period of AmeriCorps). Thus, from both a policy and message

standpoint, the Administration should clearly distinguish between mandated work assignments (even if in the public interest) and non-compulsory national and community service. The one carries a punitive message, while the other embodies the core values of this presidency, which rests on the basic themes of opportunity, responsibility, and community.

That said, I believe that AmeriCorps can provide placements for a *limited* number of WORK participants without undermining the diversity of the AmeriCorps program that is its strength. For example, a state welfare agency could contract with one of our state commissions on national service to sponsor "demonstration programs" to enroll perhaps up to 10% of WORK participants in approved AmeriCorps programs. From my perspective, however, it is important that other WORK assignments *not* be confused with AmeriCorps. The adoption of my recommendation on language should help to clarify this distinction. Your cooperation in this matter is therefore greatly appreciated.

Let me reiterate our support of the welfare reform plan in general and indicate our enthusiasm in working with you on the prevention strategy.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 2, 1993

MEMORANDUM FOR DAVID GERGEN
GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS

FROM: ELI SEGAL *ES*

SUBJECT: NATIONAL SERVICE AND WELFARE REFORM

As you know, the Corporation for National Service is enthusiastic about being a part of many of the President's major domestic policy initiatives, including welfare reform. However, I am writing to share a concern I have about the emerging debate surrounding the President's welfare reform initiative. As you know, that effort is in its developmental stages, although I understand that the President may be making preliminary decisions soon. As the media coverage of this past weekend indicates, there is keen interest on the part of the press as to what the basic provisions of the package will be. I am concerned that one such provision, requiring mandatory community service for welfare recipients unable to find private sector employment, may result in the Administration sending mixed messages about national and community service that could adversely affect our ability to deliver the President's "signature project."

Because the mandatory service requirement will likely be one of the most controversial elements of the reform package, and because it will potentially affect so many individuals (far more than the 20,000 participants we hope to enroll by next Summer), it will surely gain widespread attention. It therefore has the potential to define the message that this Presidency will send about the role of service in society, notwithstanding our efforts to the contrary.

To date, the President, through the National and Community Service Trust Act and the establishment of the Corporation, has put forth a call to *voluntary* service that is fundamentally articulated in the positive terms of civic responsibility, strengthening community and expanding educational opportunity. He has tapped into the idealism of young people from all backgrounds by upholding service to the community and nation as a responsibility of citizenship and an act of hope that characterizes the values his Administration seeks to reclaim. This is markedly different from the punitive message associated with compensatory service in the courts, or now, potentially, with mandatory service for welfare benefits.

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The distinction is more than cosmetic; it goes to the very essence of reinventing government. Welfare recipients are and can be active, productive citizens. And as such, they are resources—not problems—for communities. The mandated community service requirements should therefore be proposed and discussed in that context, and national service should be understood as a vehicle to lift people up, not “punish” them for their status. This last point is particularly relevant to the Corporation as it develops a national recruitment and outreach strategy to—in the words of the President— “make national service look like America.” It is therefore central to our success as an agency that Americans not view national and community service as punitive.

In addition, the potential exists for national and community service to be understood not as the innovative approach to “getting things done” that the President has proposed, but rather as a public works program for people unable to find private sector employment. In this regard, it is worth remembering the lessons of the CETA program, which engendered ceaseless anxiety and negative press about “make work on the public dime.” This association could be highly detrimental not solely to the welfare reform effort, but to general support for the President’s national service program as well.

I want to stress that I am fully supportive of the efforts to reform the welfare system, including the welfare-to-work provisions that might involve community service as a means of transition to employment. But I do believe that the welfare initiative, if not packaged properly, could have unintended consequences that seriously confound our ability to ensure that national service is clearly understood and embraced by the American people (as surely as they embrace the Peace Corps) as the President’s “transcendent legacy.”

I would like to meet soon with both of you, Bruce Reed (and others you might suggest) to discuss this matter, certainly before the reform proposal is finalized.

✓cc: Bruce Reed