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75 Members of Congress Call for Continued Support for the Community Service Programs

Matsui Calls for Continued Federal Funding of Corporation for National and Community Service

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA) and Congressman David Price (D-CT), Co-Chairs of the National Service Caucus, sent a letter Wednesday to House Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Chairman Denny Rehberg (MT-AL) and Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) requesting federal funding for the country’s national service programs. The letter was signed by 75 Members of Congress and urged the Committee to include the necessary funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), which supports critical community service programs, in the Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12) LHHS Appropriations bill.

The current draft of the FY12 LHHS Appropriations bill, put forward by Mr. Rehberg, calls for a 75 percent cut in funding for CNCS which would result in the elimination of whole programs including AmeriCorps, VISTA, NCCC, Learn & Serve America, the Social Innovation Fund and the Volunteer Generation Fund. CNCS and the projects it supports not only provide vital services for struggling communities, but also provide jobs and job training for their participants. In Sacramento, that would mean the end of the AmeriCorps*NCCC program located at McClellan Park – and the loss of all the disaster relief efforts they perform both in the region and around the country.

“Doing away with our national and community service programs would strike a devastating blow to communities, nonprofits, and millions of vulnerable citizens at a time when social needs are growing, unemployment is high, and Americans are eager to serve,” the letter states. “Across the country, state and local governments are facing significant budget shortfalls, creating a gap between the services citizens require and the support services state and local governments are able to provide. The five million Americans connected to national service expand the reach and

impact of more than 70,000 nonprofit and faith-based organizations to address that crisis. The skills of millions of citizens are harnessed to mentor at-risk youth, care for seniors, assist the jobless, re-engage wounded veterans in meaningful work, rebuild after disasters, and teach and tutor in our lowest performing schools. If we close CNCS, this service delivery mechanism will collapse.”

“Federal appropriations bill should represent our nation’s priorities. In this time of high unemployment and growing poverty levels, AmeriCorps members are a crucial force in meeting community needs,” added Matsui. “If we are going to truly help our economy recover, this Congress must focus federal investments on these type of cost-effective programs that produce the highest returns. Now is not the time to cut programs that not only provide young adults with jobs and job training, but also carry out projects that tackle the nation’s needs.”

Co-signers of Matsui and Price’s letter include: Shelley Berkley (D-NV), Howard Berman (D-CA), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Madeleine Bordallo (D-GU), Leonard Boswell (D-IA), Bruce Braley (D-IA), Lois Capps (D-CA), Michael Capuano (D-MA), Russ Carnahan (D-MO), David Cicilline (D-RI), Yvette Clarke (D-NY), Hansen Clarke (D-MI), Wm. Lacy Clay (D-MO), John Conyers (D-MI), Joe Courtney (D-CT), Mark Critz (D-PA), Danny Davis (D-IL), Susan Davis (D-CA), Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Diana DeGette (D-CO), Mike Doyle (D-PA), Keith Ellison (D-MN), Sam Farr (D-CA), Chaka Fattah (D-PA), Bob Filner (D-CA), Barney Frank (D-MA), Marcia Fudge (D-OH), Alcee Hastings (D-FL), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Brian Higgins (D-NY), Rush Holt (D-NJ), Hank Johnson (D-GA), Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), William Keating (D-MA), Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), Jim Langevin (D-RI), Rick Larsen (D-WA), Barbara Lee (D-CA), John Lewis (D-GA), David Loebsack (D-IA), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Edward Markey (D-MA), James McGovern (D-MA), Jerry McNerney (D-CA), George Miller (D-CA), Gwen Moore (D-WI), Jim Moran (D-VA), Jerold Nadler (D-NY), Richard Neal (D-MA), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Ed Perlmutter (D-CO), Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Mike Quigley (D-IL), Nick Rahall (D-WV), Charles Rangel (D-NY), Laura Richardson (D-CA), Tim Ryan (D-OH), John Sarbanes (D-MD), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Louise Slaughter (D-NY), Jackie Speier (D-CA), Betty Sutton (D-OH), Bennie Thompson (D-MS), John Tierney (D-MA), Edolphus Towns (D-NY), Niki Tsongas (D-MA), Chris VanHollen (D-MD), Henry Waxman (D-CA), Peter Welch (D-VT), Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) and John Yarmuth (D-KY).

A PDF copy of the signed letter is available [here](#) .

The full text of the letter is below:

Dear Chairman Rehberg and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As strong supporters of national and community service, we urge you to accede to the Senate and provide \$1.09 billion for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) as you continue to negotiate funding levels for the Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12) Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations bill.

We were extremely disappointed to see the harmful and ill-advised cuts to CNCS that were included in the House draft LHHS appropriations bill. The proposed bill would slash the CNCS budget by 75 percent, eliminating AmeriCorps, VISTA, NCCC, Learn & Serve America, the Social Innovation Fund and the Volunteer Generation Fund. Furthermore, this bill would instruct the agency to prepare for an orderly shutdown, thereby dissolving the service enterprise that has been built by Republican and Democratic presidents, governors, and mayors, and which was reauthorized in 2009 with broad bipartisan support in the House and Senate.

Doing away with our national and community service programs would strike a devastating blow to communities, nonprofits, and millions of vulnerable citizens at a time when social needs are growing, unemployment is high, and Americans are eager to serve. Across the country, state and local governments are facing significant budget shortfalls, creating a gap between the services citizens require and the support services state and local governments are able to provide. The five million Americans connected to national service expand the reach and impact of more than 70,000 nonprofit and faith-based organizations to address that crisis. The skills of millions of citizens are harnessed to mentor at-risk youth, care for seniors, assist the jobless, re-engage wounded veterans in meaningful work, rebuild after disasters, and teach and tutor in our lowest performing schools. If we close CNCS, this service delivery mechanism will collapse.

National service is also part of our nation's economic recovery efforts. With record unemployment rates among young adults, national service performs a vital function: empowering unemployed Americans to address the nation's needs, while giving them the skills and training required to transition into full-time jobs. AmeriCorps members receive post-service education scholarships that make college more accessible; low-income Senior Corps participants earn stipends (\$2.65/hour) that they use to afford prescriptions and home heating bills. These are added benefits that the American economy cannot afford to lose. If we close CNCS, about 100,000 jobs will be eliminated nationwide.

Funding for CNCS and its programs is a sound investment for the taxpayer that pays off many times over. The nonprofit and faith-based organizations supported by CNCS leverage one dollar from the private sector, foundations, and other sources for nearly every federal dollar received from CNCS. That is nearly 2 billion dollars that are flowing into communities nationwide and are being used to support cost-effective community solutions. In addition, organizations supported by CNCS provide \$2.01 worth of educational, health, economic, job preparedness, and housing services for each federal dollar invested.

Nearly every president has envisioned an active role for citizens in keeping our democracy vibrant and addressing the nation's challenges. Today, we must continue to invest in the service infrastructure that we've already built – that has strong private sector support – and provide more opportunities that bring ordinary citizens together to confront the critical problems plaguing our nation. This is not the time to tear down the entire service enterprise. It is the time to ensure its preservation and growth.

We know you face many difficult choices, but we believe the investment in the CNCS will pay off many times over - preserving jobs, strengthening our economy, improving communities nationwide, and making service at all levels, by all age groups, a key component of what it means to be an American. We urge you to protect the Corporation for National and Community Service from devastating cuts and to fund the agency at the Senate level of \$1.09 billion in the final version of the FY12 bill.

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