



# Tom Harkin, U.S. Senator



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties  
FROM: Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA)  
RE: **Analysis of House Elimination of AmeriCorps and Community Service Programs in Iowa**  
DATE: February 23, 2011

Last week, the U.S. House approved a budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2011 that eliminates the Corporation for National and Community Service, which funds community service programs across the country. Analysis released today shows that this plan would drastically reduce dozens of projects throughout Iowa including the Boys and Girls Club, Habitat for Humanity and the Iowa Keepers of the Land.

There is no question that the time has come for tough budget decisions, but **the smart way to bring down the deficit is for Congress to pursue a balanced approach of major spending cuts and necessary revenue increases, while continuing to take steps to strengthen the Iowa economy.** That is the only way our country will remain competitive in the global economy and create good jobs that provide a sustained economic expansion in the years ahead. At a time **when budgets are stretching thin in Iowa and around the country, community service is extremely valuable.** The benefits of these programs far outweigh the modest costs to fund them.

A map of specific Iowa programs that would lose federal funds can be found [here](#).

Programs slated for elimination include:

### **AmeriCorps**

Each year, approximately 80,000 Americans sign up to work at community service projects in exchange for a modest stipend and a \$5,000 scholarship. Projects across Iowa include tutoring, mentoring, assisting as communities respond to tornadoes and floods, cleaning up parks, helping the elderly stay in their homes, and addressing a host of other community needs. The program allows Iowa students to access more than \$5 million of scholarships each year that they use at Iowa colleges and universities.

### **VISTA**

Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) agree to work full-time for a year to alleviate poverty in their communities. In Iowa, 90 individuals each year create programs that could include setting up soup kitchens and shelters, weatherizing homes, organizing volunteer financial counseling programs, and developing school supply drives for children in need. All projects must be self-sustaining by the end of the VISTA service.

### **Senior Corps**

Each year, Senior Corps engages over 400,000 Americans age 55 and older to devote 10-20 hours a week volunteering in their community. Under the Senior Companion and Foster Grandparent programs, low-income Iowa seniors receive a small stipend (\$2.65 an hour) to work with homebound seniors and children with special needs, respectively. Over 6,000 Iowa seniors volunteer each year.

A map of proposed cuts in the House budget to community service programs can be [here](#).

### **Learn and Serve**

Across the country, almost 1.5 million students each year experience some form of service learning as a result of the Learn and Serve program. Through service learning, 11,000 young Iowans —from kindergartners to college students— use what they learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems, helping them become engaged community members as well as educated adults.

### **Last year, service projects in Iowa provided a wide variety of services that would be lost if the programs above are eliminated:**

- Over 11,000 students had the opportunity to engage in community service linked to academic achievement and civic engagement.
- More than 1,100 individuals affected by disaster received assistance and over 400 disaster-affected homes were repaired with more than 20,000 sandbags filled and placed.
- More than 9,700 children had a mentor/tutor.
- More than 13,000 disadvantaged children and youth had access to youth development programming.
- Over 100,000 volunteers were recruited and utilized in Iowa communities.
- More than 90 houses were built for families in need.
- Over 11,000 youth were provided with safe places to play and learn during out-of-school hours.
- Over 2,000 youth were engaged in “Healthy Start” programming to promote nutrition and exercise.
- 1,550 youth learned about school-to-work transition.
- Over 700 homebound seniors and older adults received help continuing to living independently in their own homes.
- Over 1000 community agencies get critical services to keep their doors open.

Harkin’s full statement on the budget proposals before Congress can be found [here](#).

For a compilation of all outreach pieces on this issue, please click [here](#).