

CRS Report for Congress

The Corporation for National and Community Service: Overview of Programs and FY2007 Funding

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Prepared for Members and
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Summary

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is an independent federal agency that administers the programs authorized by two statutes: the National and Community Service Act (NCSA, P.L. 101-610) of 1990, as amended, and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act (DVSA, P.L. 93-113) of 1973, as amended. This report first provides an overview of each NCSA and DVSA program and then compares CNCS funding from the FY2006 Appropriation (P.L.109-149), the FY2007 budget request, and the FY2007 Appropriation (P.L.110-5).

The NCSA is designed to meet unmet human, educational, environmental, and public safety needs, and to renew an ethic of civic responsibility by encouraging citizens to participate in national service programs. The NCSA authorizes four community service programs: Learn and Serve America, AmeriCorps State and National Grants, the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), and the Points of Light Foundation. The NCSA also authorizes the National Service Trust, which funds educational awards for community service participants. Additionally, America's Promise, sometimes referred to as a partnership grant, is funded under the general authority of the NCSA.

A central purpose of the DVSA, which authorizes the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program and the National Senior Volunteer Corps, is to foster and expand voluntary service in communities while helping the vulnerable, the disadvantaged, the elderly, and the poor. The National Senior Volunteer Corps includes three main programs: the Foster Grandparents Program, the Senior Companion Program, and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

Appropriations for the DVSA and the NCSA programs are made annually through the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (Labor-HHS-ED). In FY2006 (P.L. 109-149), \$899.960 million was appropriated for all of CNCS. The President's FY2007 budget requested \$851.462 million for CNCS. In the 109th Congress, a series of continuing resolutions (CRs) were enacted in the fall of 2006 to fund appropriations for FY2007. In the 110th Congress, H.J.Res. 20 was introduced to continue FY2007 appropriations through the end of the fiscal year, and was enacted on February 15, 2007, as P.L. 110-5. For FY2007, CNCS is funded at \$884.124 million.

This report will be updated as warranted to reflect legislative developments.

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Most Recent Developments

In the 109th Congress, the appropriations process for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS-ED) for FY2007 was not completed. Congress passed a series of continuing resolutions (CRs) in the fall of 2006 to fund appropriations for FY2007. In the 110th Congress, H.J.Res. 20, the Revised Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2007, was introduced on January 21, 2007, to continue FY2007 appropriations through September 30, 2007. It was signed into law by President George W. Bush on February 15, 2007, as P.L. 110-5. The law funds the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) at \$884.124 million for FY2007.

Introduction

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) was established by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 (P.L. 103-82). Operating as an independent federal agency, the CNCS oversees all national and community service programs authorized in two statutes: the National Community Service Act (NCSA) of 1990,¹ as amended, and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act (DVSA) of 1973,² as amended.

Although authorized funding for CNCS programs expired at the end of FY1996, funding continues through annual appropriations. DVSA programs have been continually funded under the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies (L-HHS-ED) Appropriations Act. Since FY2006, funding for NCSA programs is also annually appropriated in L-HHS-ED.³

This report first provides a summary of each NCSA and DVSA program. Next, it compares funding under Labor-HHS-ED in:

- the FY2006 Appropriation Act (P.L. 109-149),

¹ National and Community Service Act (NCSA) of 1990, P.L. 101-610.

² Domestic Volunteer Service Act (DVSA) of 1973, P.L. 93-113.

³ Prior to FY2006, funding for NCSA programs was under the Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development (VA-HUD) Appropriations Act.

- the President’s FY2007 Budget of the U.S. Government (request), and
- the FY2007 Continuing Appropriations Resolution (P.L. 110-5).

Program-by-Program Overview and FY2007 Funding

NCSA Programs and Funding

On November 16, 1990, the National Community Service Act (NCSA) of 1990 was signed into law to address unmet human, educational, environmental, and public safety needs. One main purpose of NCSA is to renew an ethic of civil responsibility and community spirit in the U.S. by encouraging citizens to participate in national service programs. NCSA, as amended in 1993, includes Learn and Serve America, AmeriCorps State and National Grants, the National Service Trust, National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), and the Points of Light Foundation. **Table 2** contains funding information for NCSA programs.

Learn and Serve America (Title I-B). *Program Focus:* Since 1990, Learn and Serve America (LSA) has authorized three community service programs benefitting students and communities. These programs provide for “service-learning” (i.e., student mentoring and tutoring) or collaborative efforts between schools and local communities addressing local community issues in areas such as education, public safety, human services, and the environment. The three programs are (1) school-based programs for students, (2) community-based programs for school-age young people, and (3) higher-education programs for community service. *Eligibility:* elementary, secondary, and post-secondary students. *Benefits:* the Learn and Service America programs offer no stipends, educational awards, or other direct benefits. *Administrative Entity:* LSA programs are administered, depending on the program, by (1) CNCS, (2) an independent state education agency, (3) a state commission on national service, or (4) a public or private nonprofit organization.

AmeriCorps State and National Grants (Title I-C). *Program Focus:* Programs under AmeriCorps State and National Grants identify and address critical community needs, including tutoring and mentoring disadvantaged youth, managing or operating after-school programs, helping communities respond to disasters, improving health services, building affordable housing, and cleaning parks and streams. Created in 1993, AmeriCorps was developed as a network of local, state, and national service programs for individuals aged 17 and older. Grants include formula and competitive grants to states, national competitive grants to nonprofit organizations, grants to national and local organizations for the Education Award Program (EAP),⁴ and grants to U.S. territories and Indian tribes. *Eligibility:* individuals aged 17 and older. *Amount of Volunteer Service:* full-time or part-time for a nine- to 12-month period. *Benefits:* AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance and, in some cases, student-loan forbearance (i.e., loan postponement),

⁴ Education Award Programs (EAP) members receive educational awards and loan forbearance, if applicable, but do not receive other federally funded benefits such as a living allowance.

health coverage, and child care for those who qualify. AmeriCorps members can receive an educational award⁵ of up to \$4,725 per year of full-time service, the amount is reduced based on service term or part-time hours (see **Table 1**). *Administrative Entity:* Each state Governor appoints members of a service commission to manage, monitor, and administer annual grant competitions for the individual state. CNCS reviews the State Commission formula package and makes the awards. CNCS selects all other grantees and makes the awards.

Table 1. Educational Awards by Service Term

Member service term	Number of hours	Educational award
Full time	at least 1,700	\$4,725.00
Half time	at least 900	\$2,362.50
Reduced half time	at least 675	\$1,800.00
Quarter time	at least 450	\$1,250.00
Minimum time	at least 300	\$1,000.00

Source: CNCS, FY2007 Congressional Budget Justification.

National Service Trust (Title I-D). The National Service Trust, a special account in the U.S. Treasury, provides a maximum of two educational awards per volunteer participant in AmeriCorps Grants, the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), and VISTA. The trust fund also provides funding for scholarships to high school students rewarded for outstanding community service. Additionally, the National Service Trust provides interest payments on qualified student loans to recipients of AmeriCorps Grants and participants in NCCC or VISTA who have obtained forbearance (loan postponement).

National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) (Title I-E). *Program Focus:* NCCC is a residential program that focuses on short-term projects such as building homes for low-income families and helping to provide disaster relief. *Eligibility:* individuals aged 18 to 24. *Amount of volunteer service:* participants can serve up to two years full-time. Full-time service is defined as 10 months each year. *Benefits:* NCCC participants may receive a living allowance, room and board, and an educational award of \$4,725 per year of service. *Administrative Entity:* CNCS oversees administrative support.

Program Update: the FY2007 Presidential budget proposed the elimination of the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC).⁶ According to the

⁵ AmeriCorps Educational Awards are funded under the National Service Trust. These awards are intended to help pay qualified student loans, or finance college, graduate school, or eligible vocational training.

⁶ U.S. Office of Management and Budget, *Program Assessment: AmeriCorps National* (continued...)

Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) assessment, AmeriCorps NCCC was rated ineffective due to significant flaws in the program's design, performance, and cost effectiveness. The FY2007 budget request included \$4.950 million to close out operations of the program.

Points of Light Foundation (Title III). The Points of Light Foundation is a nonprofit charitable organization that functions as an independent and autonomous entity. The foundation promotes community service through a partnership with the Volunteer Center National Network. The purposes of the Points of Light Foundation are to (1) encourage all Americans to help solve critical social problems by volunteering, (2) identify successful and promising community service projects and disseminate information about them, and (3) discover new leaders and develop individuals and institutions that serve as examples of commitment to others.

America's Promise. America's Promise is a national foundation based on recommendations of the President's Summit for America's Future, held in Philadelphia in 1997.⁷ The conference concluded that every young person, in order to succeed, needs Five Promises: (1) caring adults in their lives, (2) safe places with structured activities in non-school hours, (3) a healthy start and future, (4) marketable skills, and (5) opportunities to participate in community service. To achieve its goals, the foundation works with corporations, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and government agencies.

DVSA Programs and Funding

In 1973, Congress passed the Domestic Volunteer Service Act (DVSA). The purpose of DVSA is to foster and expand voluntary citizen service throughout the nation. DVSA programs are designed to help the poor, the disadvantaged, the vulnerable and the elderly. Administered by the CNCS, the DVSA programs include the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) and the National Senior Volunteer Corps. The National Senior Volunteer Corps consists of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program. **Table 2** contains funding information for DVSA programs.

VISTA (Title I-A). *Program Focus:* the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program encourages Americans to participate in community service in an effort to eliminate poverty. *Eligibility:* individuals aged 18 and older. *Amount of volunteer service:* VISTA members serve full-time for up to three years. *Benefits:* VISTA members may receive a living allowance, student-loan forbearance (i.e., postponement), health coverage, relocation costs, training, and child care assistance. VISTA participants receive an educational award of up to \$4,725 per year of full-time service or a \$1,200 "lump sum" cash stipend from the National Service Trust. The maximum number of educational awards per participant is two; the maximum

⁶ (...continued)

Civilian Community Corps, available at [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/expectmore/summary/10004457.2005.html>].

⁷ America's Promise is funded under the general authority of the National and Community Service Act of 1990.

number of lump-sum payments per participant is three. *Administrative Entity*: the CNCS office in each state.

National Senior Volunteer Corps (Title II). The National Senior Volunteer Corps consists of three programs, summarized below: the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Foster Grandparent Program (FGP), and the Senior Companion Program (SCP).

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) (Title II-A). *Program Focus*: volunteers in the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) may play community service roles in education, health and nutrition services, community and economic development, and other areas of human need. *Eligibility*: individuals aged 55 and older. *Amount of volunteer service*: participants can contribute up to 40 hours each week. *Benefits*: the RSVP offers no direct benefits (e.g., stipends or educational awards). *Administrative Entity*: the CNCS office in each state.

Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) (Title II-B). *Program Focus*: the Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) supports children with exceptional needs by providing aid and services. FGP members mentor children and teenagers, teach model parenting skills, and help care for premature infants and children with disabilities. *Eligibility*: individuals must be 60 or older and meet income eligibility requirements. *Amount of volunteer service*: volunteer schedules, which range from 15 to 40 hours each week, average 20 hours a week. *Benefits*: if qualified, members may receive a stipend of \$2.65 an hour. Members may also receive accident, liability, and automobile insurance coverage during assignments. *Administrative Entity*: the CNCS office in each state.

Senior Companion Program (SCP) (Title II-C). *Program Focus*: the Senior Companion Program (SCP) gives older adults the opportunity to assist frail, homebound individuals, most of whom are elderly. SCP volunteers help with such tasks as finding transportation to medical appointments, paying bills, and buying groceries. *Eligibility*: individuals must be 60 or older and meet income eligibility requirements. *Amount of volunteer service*: volunteer schedules, which range from 15 to 40 hours each week, average 20 hours a week. *Benefits*: participants receive a stipend of \$2.65 an hour. *Administrative Entity*: the CNCS office in each state.

**Table 2. Corporation for
National and Community Service Funding, FY2007**

(in thousands of dollars)

Programs	FY2006 Appropriation	FY2007 Request	FY2007 Appropriation
National and Community Service Act (NCSA) Programs			
Learn and Serve America	\$37,125	\$34,155	\$37,125
AmeriCorps State and National Grants	\$264,825	\$258,959	\$264,825
National Service Trust	\$138,600	\$124,720	\$117,720
National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)	\$26,730	\$4,950	\$26,730
Innovation, Demonstration, and Assistance Activities Evaluation	\$16,281	\$9,029	\$31,131 ^a
State Commission Administrative Grants	\$3,960	\$3,960	\$3,960
Points of Light Foundation	\$12,516	\$12,516	\$12,516
America's Promise	\$9,900	\$9,900	\$0.00 ^a
	\$4,950	\$4,950	\$0.00 ^a
NCSA Programs subtotal	\$514,887	\$463,139	\$494,007
Domestic Volunteer Service Act (DVSA) Programs			
VISTA	\$95,464	\$95,466	\$95,464
VISTA Revolving Fund ^b	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,500 ^b
National Senior Volunteer Corps	\$217,586	\$217,592	\$217,586
— <i>Foster Grandparents Program (non-add)</i>	\$110,937	\$110,943	\$110,937
— <i>Senior Companion Program (non-add)</i>	\$46,964	\$46,964	\$46,964
— <i>Retired Senior Program (non-add)</i>	\$59,685	\$59,685	\$59,685
DVSA Programs subtotal	\$313,050	\$313,058	\$316,550
Inspector General ^c	\$5,940	\$4,950	\$4,940
Salaries and Expenses ^c	\$66,083	\$70,315	\$68,628
CNCS grand total	\$899,960^d	\$851,462	\$884,124

Sources: Funding for the FY2006 and FY2007 appropriations and the presidential budget request for FY2007 are compiled from the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2006 (P.L. 109-149), the Revised Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2007 (P.L. 110-5), the FY2007 Congressional Budget Justification, and from information supplied by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

- a. Funding for the innovation, demonstration, and assistance activities estimate presumably includes funding for the Points of Light Foundation and for America's Promise. The FY2006 appropriation for the Points of Light Foundation and for America's Promise totaled \$14.85 million, which is the exact amount of the Innovation, Demonstration, and Assistance Activities FY2007 increase over FY2006.
- b. This funding will create and provide initial capitalization for a revolving fund, which advances funds to VISTA grantees who assume a portion of the costs of supporting VISTA members. Funds are advanced so that a VISTA member can receive one check from the Corporation — rather than one from the Corporation and one from the grantee — for a “subsistence” allowance, and so that grantees can reimburse the Corporation throughout the year.
- c. Funding for the Office of the Inspector General and salaries and expenses for all of CNCS are included in the CNCS grand total.
- d. Excludes the \$10 million emergency supplemental appropriation contained in P.L.109-234 for necessary expenses related to the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes.