

Foreword by President George W. Bush

Americans have always believed in an ethic of service and civic responsibility that includes helping those in need and promoting the common good. Since September 11, Americans have demonstrated their true character in unity, generosity, patriotism, and civic pride.

Today, Americans serve in their neighborhoods and communities in countless, extraordinary ways. While most of our Nation's civic work is being done without the aid of government, the Federal Government can do a much better job in helping support and encourage a culture of community service and civic responsibility.

During my State of the Union address, I encouraged all Americans to give at least two years – or 4,000 hours – of service over their lives. I announced the establishment of the USA Freedom Corps to foster a culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility. The USA Freedom Corps helps introduce citizens to volunteer opportunities in their local communities. It also creates new service opportunities within: (1) a new Citizen Corps, administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to strengthen homeland security; (2) a reformed AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America, which are administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service; and (3) a strengthened Peace Corps, run by its Director. I have also charged Executive Departments and Agencies to identify service opportunities sponsored by them and any barriers within their Departments and Agencies to community and other service.

Reforming and enhancing AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and other programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service are important steps in providing hundreds of thousands of Americans with meaningful service opportunities. Taken together, the reforms and improvements in this package represent a framework in which we all can work together to strengthen Federal support for citizen service.

I look forward to working with the Congress in a bipartisan fashion over the next several months, and in the coming years, to ensure the Federal Government does its part to support the commitment of Americans to our communities and our Nation.