

Memorandum

To: Interested Parties

From: Michael Meyers, TargetPoint Consulting

Date: December 11, 2015
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Re: GOP Should Prioritize Funding for Our National Service Programs

POST-ELECTION UPDATE:**Overwhelming Support for National Service Programs Remains Consistent Through a Year of Change
Americans Want a Renewed Commitment to National Service Programs**

Heading into the 2016 election cycle, we highlighted for Republican decision makers the strong support for National Service programs in battleground states. We reported to you one year ago that “74% of all presidential battleground state voters and 66% of Republican voters support National Service projects on a broad basis. Republicans also specifically support a federal investment of tax dollars in these programs”. Following this incredible year of change and turbulence, we felt taking a fresh, national pulse on support for National Service was appropriate.

Our just completed December survey of over 1,300 registered voters across the country, clearly demonstrates that support for National Service programs is stronger than ever.

After being given the basic facts about National Service programs **80% of voters agree that we should continue federal investment in the programs.** This includes women, African Americans, Hispanics, Independent voters, Millennials, and Democratic constituencies. 74% of Republicans and Trump Supporters agree with continued federal investment in National Service programs.

When we asked specifically if voters would support a hypothetical ‘Make America Great Again’ National Service program proposed by President Trump, an overwhelming 87% of Republicans and 88% of Trump supporters support this program.

We encourage President-Elect Trump, and Republican leadership to take a closer look at National Service programs including AmeriCorps, and Senior Corps which was started by President Richard Nixon. These programs have been historically supported by Republican presidents including George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush. Republicans should consider making funding our National Service programs a priority item in our agendas and taking more full ownership of these popular and cost-effective programs that offer multiple benefits, including providing pathways to employment and putting citizens at the center of solving the problems facing their communities.

We have outlined the results and messaging from our earlier research in the remainder of the memo. We would welcome the opportunity to provide your team with a more detailed review of this data and answer any questions you may have. To schedule a time for briefing, either in person or remotely, please contact Michael Meyers at mmeyers@targetpointconsulting.com

Challenge: Finding an Issue with Base and National Appeal

National Service is, at its foundation, built on giving back to our community and our nation. National Service programs, including AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, engage citizens in solving problems in local communities with matching support from private and other sources.

A wide range of National Service programs help members to develop their skill sets and prepare young people for work, while other programs focus on more experienced citizens, helping to enrich their lives, allowing them to stay active in their communities and provide vital community based services. National Service programs tackle local and national challenges, all while instilling a sense of duty and patriotism in its members and the lives they touch. A report released by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), which oversees the federal investment in AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, found that unemployed individuals who volunteer are 27 percent more likely to secure employment than those who do not volunteer.

A study by economists at Columbia University found that for every dollar invested in National Service programs, there is a \$3.95 return to society in terms of higher earnings, increased output and other community-wide benefits.

CNCS grantees have to match each federal dollar with private sector, philanthropic or foundation funds. As conservatives, I think it is especially important to keep in mind that National Service programs are managed locally by neighborhood, community and faith-based institutions that lead bottom-up citizen-led strategies, not top down government solutions. Additionally, at a time when we are struggling to find answers to the challenge of college student debt, National Service programs like AmeriCorps reward responsibility with an earned post-service education scholarship.

At a time when voter confidence in government is at an all-time low, National Service is government that works as we would want to see it work. Funding our National Service programs makes sense as both a conservative policy and a practical political issue.

Promoting National Service programs and the values they represent can bridge the divides between partisan groups after the 2016 election. Most critically, supporting National Service positions serves the President-elect and Republican leaders well with key voting blocs – remaining Clinton supporters, independents, women, Millennials, African Americans and Hispanic voters all support National Service at astounding levels.

Most of us have seen our National Service programs at work locally in our states, in our schools and churches, and have met with strong supporters of these programs. In addition to these wonderful anecdotes, we want to provide you some hard numbers to consider as well.

Looking at the Numbers

TargetPoint was commissioned by Voices for National Service to conduct a survey in the key presidential battleground states of Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. In these states we conducted 800 interviews with registered voters from October 3-5. The survey looked to measure initial support for National Service as a concept as well as specific National Service programs including AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and FEMA Corps, and whether or not voters felt National Service programs were good investments of taxpayer dollars.

Key Findings from the Survey

- A majority of Republicans support federal investment in National Service programs.
- Even the most conservative voting groups do not want to see funding cut from these programs.
- Supporting National Service and making funding those programs part of the agenda can improve image and favorability after the election.
- Conservative-leaning as well as key general election voting blocs are extremely responsive to messaging about the benefits that National Service provides locally and nationally.

Republican Voters Show High Levels of Support for National Service

74% of all presidential battleground state voters and 66% of Republican voters support National Service projects on a broad basis. Republicans also specifically support a federal investment of tax dollars in these programs. We asked respondents their opinion on funding National Service programs at three different intervals throughout the survey and saw an increase in support at each interval.

Initial Ballot Test: Prior to any messaging or discussion, 56% of Republicans agree that a federal investment in support of National Service is a worthwhile investment (only 25% disagree).

Informed Ballot Test: After hearing more details on how National Service programs work and the benefits they provide to both the country and individual members; support spikes up to 73% of all Republicans, and 72% among Tea Party Supporters.

Funding Preference: 78% of Republicans would like to maintain or increase the levels of spending and investment, even among the strongest Tea Party supporters we see 69% specifically advocating to maintain or increase funding for National Service projects.

Support for funding National Service programs is connected with the deep agreement on the core values that define these programs.

Republicans overwhelmingly agree National Service:

- Helps prepare young people for the workforce (75%).
- Helps build stronger neighborhoods and communities (76%).
- Helps restore important values of patriotism and civic duty to our young people (74%).
- Helps replace government handouts with local, volunteer-based, community work and empowers people to be more self-sufficient and less dependent on the government in the long run (74%).

Talking National Service to the Republican Base

Voting blocs critical to Republican elected leaders - Conservatives, Tea Party supporters, Republican-leaning independents, Senior Citizens, traditional Republicans and frequent churchgoers - express strong support across the board for National Service programs. And there are several very specific programs and messages that would be effective in either a Primary election or local constituent town hall setting including:

Conservative-leaning groups support Senior Corps, AmeriCorps and Public-Private partnership programs

- 83% of Republicans support Senior Corps projects that tap the skills, talents and experience of Americans 55 and older to meet a wide range of community challenges.
- 75% of Republicans support a service commitment through AmeriCorps to address educational, disaster response, veteran assistance, and other local and national needs.
- 74% of Republicans support National Service programs that operate as a public-private partnership that provide grants and deploy members to work with a wide range of community organizations.

Conservative-leaning groups realize the benefits National Service provides to faith-based organizations, veterans, students, and disaster victims

- 88% of Republicans support National Service when they learn it acts as a bridge for our veterans returning home from service.
- 80% of Republicans support National Service opportunities offered to help college students give back to their community in return for a college scholarship worth more than 5 thousand dollars.
- 79% of Republicans support National Service members partnering with organizations like the Red Cross to help the nation prepare, respond, and recover from natural and man-made disasters.
- 73% of Republicans support National Service members working with churches and faith-based groups to help increase their effectiveness, recruit and organize local church volunteers and help them reach more people in need.

In many cases, the most powerful items of support among conservative leaning groups overlap with the programs and benefits key November voting blocs find most impactful. This flexibility translates well as the Party considers their issue priorities, and identifies issues with broad appeal. Republicans can seamlessly build a message strategy around support and funding for National Service programs that transitions well from state-to-state and across diverse constituencies at the federal or local levels.

Conclusions

This is the time to not just consider, but make actionable, support and funding of National Service programs as part of the Republican presidential issue agenda. National Service programs will benefit from the President-Elect and Republican leadership making this a national priority, and voters' passion for the issue will bring benefits for us as a Party at the polls. National Service provides a real world, proven, common sense, conservative based solution to some of the challenges we face as a nation and Republican candidates should take advantage of the opportunity to reclaim these programs as our own and present them to the electorate. National Service is a rare concept that unites Americans, with remarkable potential implications for the Party and future elections, and irrefutable benefits to our country.
