



October 13, 2020

Dear President Trump and Vice President Biden,

We write as Americans committed to our country's national security to share our support for dramatically expanding national service in an effort to strengthen American democracy.

Each of us has served — on the front lines of battle in uniform or as civilians, representing our nation at embassies and missions across the world, analyzing critical intelligence, staffing our national security agencies, or passing laws and overseeing this critical work. In our most difficult moments, we did not ask those who served with us who they voted for or what they believed. Instead, we had each other's backs in support of our nation and our shared ideals.

We are deeply troubled by the mounting challenges facing our nation at home and abroad. The global pandemic and unprecedented levels of unemployment threaten the health of our citizens and our economic prosperity. Our children and families are navigating uncertain waters during a school year fraught with challenges that will inevitably leave many behind. Our country is facing a moment of reckoning on racial and social justice. And the hyper-polarization threatening our civic fabric is increasingly becoming a national security issue that is leaving America's leadership role in question around the world.

No one knows better than us that if we are to maintain the strength and security of this nation, we must invest in our democracy and in each other. We must invest in tangible solutions that allow us to put our differences aside and bring citizens together to tackle our biggest challenges while building the respect, empathy, and understanding among their fellow Americans. Our own service teaches us that national service must play a critical role in healing divisions in times of crisis. Serving alongside someone with a shared goal — both in and out of uniform — has the power to bond Americans from different backgrounds together in common purpose. It can create a generation of leaders invested in our country, in their communities, and in one another.

That's why we are calling on you to commit to expanding national service. One of you will be tasked with confronting the health, economic, and educational crises we are facing come January. Fortunately, young people are already on the ground serving in communities across the country and helping to address these issues. They're supporting public health workers in hospitals and clinics, mentoring and tutoring students while providing teachers with extra support in their virtual classrooms, and staffing food banks to combat food insecurity — all while building skills and experience that put them on a pathway to employment.

Expanding national service so every young person in America has the opportunity to serve — to put their differences aside and be part of the solution to these issues — is the first step towards rebuilding our frayed and polarized society. Empowering young people with the chance to turn their idealism into action will not only strengthen our democracy but build a safer, more equitable,

and more resilient America in which everyone feels a sense of responsibility for keeping our country strong.

We encourage you to build and sustain the most equitable and impactful system of national service possible so that young people of all backgrounds are able to serve at home or abroad. The Serve America Together campaign's [policy platform](#) includes helpful recommendations for making national service — including civilian, military, and public service — a common expectation and opportunity for every young American.

We call on both of you to commit to prioritizing a significant expansion of national service in an effort to build a more secure American future should you be elected to serve as President.

Sincerely,

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