



October 26, 2020

Dear President Trump and Vice President Biden,

We write to you today out of a shared concern over the current state of the American economy due to the coronavirus pandemic. If we are going to overcome this challenge, our country must invest in the next generation of young Americans by helping to give them opportunities today that will strengthen the workforce of tomorrow. We are therefore writing to ask you to prioritize national service as a pathway to rebuilding our workforce and economy.

Tens of millions of Americans have lost their jobs and are unemployed as a result of this outbreak. Young Americans face especially steep challenges. Just as young people were overwhelmingly impacted by the 2008 financial crisis, they are facing a similarly bleak economic fate due to the fallout from COVID-19. Unemployment is currently about 13.5% for young people ages 16-24, and the economic fallout of the pandemic is disproportionately impacting people of color. Tackling youth unemployment is a key component of America's economic recovery and national service is well positioned to put young Americans back to work in service to our country.

We can mobilize young Americans into full-time, paid national service opportunities that will help communities respond to and recover from COVID-19 by fighting learning loss, supporting our frontline public health workers, and tackling food and housing insecurity. At the same time, national service can put young people whose lives have been disrupted due to the uncertainty created by COVID-19 back on a path to furthering their education and careers. By participating in a well-structured service year, these young Americans can get the kinds of support and training that will help them develop the skills and capabilities needed to boost our economy.

Putting young people back to work through national service is extremely cost-effective. In fact, for every one dollar in federal taxes spent on national service programs, the return to society, program members, and the government is over seventeen dollars. National service also allows young people to develop professional skills — including problem solving, leadership, communication, and confidence — that will make them more valuable employees in the long-term. Additionally, national service is an effective talent pipeline that develops leaders who go on to careers in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, and exposes young people from a variety of backgrounds to careers in often overlooked, but necessary, sectors. The experience not only strengthens this next generation of our labor force, but also creates a stronger citizenry of Americans who are poised to be actively involved in their communities.

To ensure that all young people, regardless of background, are able to participate in national service, we encourage you to build and sustain the most equitable and impactful system of national service possible. The strongest possible national service system for America will need to address and remedy inequities that have historically acted as barriers to national service, especially for underrepresented populations, by raising the living allowance, making the education award tax-free, providing much-needed healthcare and childcare benefits to those who serve, removing barriers related to educational attainment and justice-involvement, and more.

The Serve America Together campaign's [policy platform](#) includes additional helpful recommendations for making national service — including civilian, military, and public service — a common expectation and opportunity for every young American.

National service can put Americans back to work, address record unemployment, and create pathways to economic opportunity for people of all backgrounds. We call on both of you to commit to prioritizing a significant expansion of national service that can help rebuild America's workforce should you be elected to serve as President.

Sincerely,

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