IN PURSUIT OF CONSENSUS

A SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON SERVICE
JULY 17, 1996

Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service

The Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service
The Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service consists of corporate, community and private foundation grantmakers who share an interest in the distinctly American tradition of community and national service. We are committed to expanding opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to serve their community, state and nation.

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Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service  
February 1997
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OVERVIEW

The word “service” conjures up different images for different people. Some may immediately reflect back fondly to Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Civilian Conservation Corps, a substantial federal effort to respond to the national crisis of unemployment and widespread hunger; while others hear the word “service” and think of President John Kennedy’s vision. In launching the Peace Corps as a strategy for building a more peaceful and democratic world, Kennedy commended the nation to, “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” In all of its manifestations, in every image the word provokes, “service” conveys a persistent theme of giving—giving of oneself out of commitment or obligation.

When campaigning for President in 1988, George Bush advocated for the creation of a “national service foundation” modeled on the Peace Corps that would encourage young people to volunteer in their communities. In 1990, under the leadership of then President George Bush, the National and Community Service Act passed, and a small national service commission was established along with the Points of Light Foundation. The Commission on National and Community Service was designed to provide funding to states which would then fund local programs. In 1992, presidential candidate Bill Clinton spoke of the need for a national service program, a kind of domestic Peace Corps, to engage young people in communities across the nation, addressing local problems through local action. In his inaugural address President Clinton stated, “I challenge a new generation of young Americans to a season of service.” In September of 1993, new legislation was adopted that established the Corporation for National Service to administer AmeriCorps, a model for service, that straddled the need for national identity with the importance of local implementation. The AmeriCorps program was designed to use federal funding to stimulate non-federal investment in efforts to mobilize youth in community problem solving efforts.

At about the same time that the 1993 legislation was enacted, a group of foundation and corporate grantmakers who had an interest in service as a strategy for getting things done and modeling civic participation came together to share their experiences in supporting community and national service and to discuss the potential for expanding opportunities to serve. This group called themselves the Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service (Grantmaker Forum).

The Grantmaker Forum’s primary interest is in building a better appreciation of service as a community problem-solving strategy through developing and sharing an enhanced understanding of the value and application of service. The Grantmaker Forum aims to inspire increased support—both financial and programmatic—of service across the public, private, non-profit and philanthropic sectors, and in a wide range of settings, from schools to community-based organizations.

Over a two year period this ad hoc association of grantmakers met six times. Then, in November of 1995, they decided to survey corporate and foundation grantmakers across the nation to identify areas of common interest and concern and to use that information to broaden philanthropic support of service programs. In the late spring of 1996, the Grantmaker Forum released its findings in a Working Paper entitled, The Philanthropic Perspective on Community and National Service. The results of this effort led to yet another step: to reach beyond the confines of philanthropy and engage in a dialogue with program and policy analysts at the local and national level.

1 A copy of the Grantmaker Forum’s Working Paper on Community and National Service is available upon request, although the findings are summarized within this document.
Working with the Hudson Institute and the Progressive Policy Institute, the Grantmaker Forum sponsored a Symposium on Service in Washington, DC in July of 1996 entitled, National and Community Service: A New Bargain? The Symposium aimed to explore the role of government—in particular the role of the federal government—in fostering an ethic of service throughout the nation. The Symposium provided an opportunity for people holding opposing views to talk with one another, to clarify their differences, and to find common ground. This document, based on a recorded transcript, provides a summary of the Symposium’s proceedings.

I. BACKGROUND

Though the idea of community service is hundreds of years old, and the concept of a large-scale national service program dates back to William James’ 1910 essay, The Moral Equivalent of War, it was in the 1980’s that a resurgence in youth service occurred. In addition to many organizations that had traditionally incorporated service as part of their programs, including the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and 4-H, there were new players on the horizon—new organizations dedicated solely to the idea that young people should be encouraged, indeed asked, to serve. Young people were at the forefront of the resurgence because they felt that they had a right and a responsibility to address the serious social issues facing their communities. Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL), Campus Compact, the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps and Youth Service America were among the organizations that were created to help shape the new movement during the early and mid-1980’s. It was also in the 1980’s that the Ford Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Foundation became major investors in the service movement at the national level.

Corps of the 1930’s. The infrastructures developed to support this initiative include bipartisan State Commissions appointed by Governors, and, at the federal level, the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation). The 1993 legislation established the Corporation as the rubric

Under the leadership of President Bush, Congress enacted the National and Community Service Act of 1990, which created a new federal partner to help develop this burgeoning field. The Act established the Commission on National and Community Service with responsibility for making government grants in four program areas: K-12 schools, higher education, youth corps and national service models. Allocating its appropriation of approximately $75 million, the 1990 legislation funded existing service programs but did not put forward or promote a specific model of service. In addition to the Commission, President Bush also created the Points of Light Foundation to spread his message that “the definition of a successful life must include serving others.” The Points of Light Foundation would later merge with the National Volunteer Center and become the hub of the volunteer center movement.

It was also in the 1980’s that the idea of national service captured the imagination of then-Governor Bill Clinton and the Democratic Leadership Council. In 1992, national service became a centerpiece of his Presidential campaign. In fact, during a campaign focused almost solely on the economy, it was the idea of national service—that citizens working together to solve some of the nation’s most pressing problems, to build a spirit of community and to renew the ethic of civic responsibility—that inspired people across the country.

In 1993, under the leadership of President Bill Clinton, Congress enacted the National and Community Service Trust Act, which established the Corporation for National Service and a “model” for national service: AmeriCorps. The model included a prescribed level of benefits, program priorities and expectations. AmeriCorps is the nation’s largest non-military, stipended national service program since the Civilian Conservation
under which the efforts of the Commission, the White House Office of National Service, and the ACTION programs (which included VISTA, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Senior Companions and Foster Grandparents) would be organized.

Before there was federal support of service, schools, colleges, non-profit agencies, foundations and corporate funders along with individual contributors were the primary sources of financial support for service-related programs and activities. These alternative sources of support were used to fund the recruitment, training and supervision of part-time volunteers, and contributed to the development of a decentralized, community-based infrastructure upon which a national service initiative could be built.

Over the last three years, the introduction of federal dollars has substantially expanded the field of service, prompting the development of new program placements and inspiring innovative applications of service as a strategy for community problem-solving. As a result of federal funding, access to service opportunities has expanded to people who, without stipends or financial support, would have been unable to serve. **Federal funding has successfully leveraged private, philanthropic and non-federal government dollars:** these resources have contributed to the continued development of the systems required to recruit, train and supervise volunteers, and to use volunteers effectively and efficiently in a variety of settings across the country.

**II. GRANTMAKER FORUM - FORMATION AND PURPOSE**

At the same time that the President and Congress were negotiating the adoption of the National and Community Service Trust Act, a group of grantmakers representing both corporate and foundation giving programs, began to meet informally to discuss their financial support of and experience with community and national service programs. From the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan, with its long history of supporting service learning programs in schools and creating an infrastructure for the service field; to The James Irvine Foundation in San Francisco, with its history of contributing to both program development and research related to service programs; to the Ford Foundation in New York City, which is actively developing partnerships for service; to the Surdna Foundation, also in New York City, with its interest in service as a youth development strategy—these grantmakers had a shared interest in understanding how federal involvement would impact the landscape of service programs. Established in association with Philanthropy and the Public Sector, a project of the Council on Foundations, this ad hoc collection of grantmakers called themselves the Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service.

In its first two years, the Grantmaker Forum held six national briefings to examine the field of service and report on relevant program and policy developments. After the 1994 elections, the issue of service began to generate considerable, and frequently partisan, debate in Washington, DC. The Grantmaker Forum met in November 1995 to discuss the status of community and national service in general and the prospects for continued federal support of service programs through the reauthorization of the 1993 National and Community Service Trust Act.
During this meeting, the Grantmaker Forum adopted the following statement of principles:

- Community and national service is people working together in cost-effective ways to improve their communities and nation;
- Participation in community and national service develops a sense of responsibility to community;
- Community volunteerism and national service are deeply rooted American traditions that improve our lives, build our communities, and strengthen our democracy by getting people involved;
- Community service as a national movement is a proven example of partnering among all sectors—individuals, churches, schools, non-profits, businesses, and government, to meet pressing community needs. It works best when it is community-led and government assisted; and,
- It is essential that community and national service be a model for shared responsibility—those who are served also serve and lead.

At this meeting, Grantmaker Forum participants decided to learn more about the philanthropic perspective on service. Believing that grantmakers are indeed stakeholders in service by way of being investors in service, the Grantmaker Forum decided to give voice to the philanthropic perspective, first by researching that voice, and then by publishing the results. In January of 1996, the Grantmaker Forum retained a consultant who conducted interviews with a sample of grantmakers across the nation on a number of key questions concerning their involvement and experience in service programs. In the spring of 1996, the results were published in a Working Paper entitled, Funding Service - Shared Responsibility

The Philanthropic Perspective on Community and National Service.

The views expressed during this process were remarkably consistent with the principles that had been adopted by the Grantmaker Forum at its November 1995 meeting, reflecting a unity of vision within the philanthropic sector both about the value of service and about the importance of strong and multi-sector support. A definitive philanthropic perspective began to emerge. What follows is a summary of issues from the Working Paper interviews. They represent topics on which the Grantmaker Forum found substantial consensus.

The Purpose of Service

Grantmakers see service as a strategy for addressing community problems. Service contributes to community development and is a strategy for cultivating a sense of personal and civic responsibility within the person(s) engaged in the service activity. By engaging young people in activities that “get things done” they develop a sense of accomplishment and of the power of the individual to make a difference.

The National Dimension of Service

Realizing that local initiative is the fuel that drives the service movement, grantmakers believe that there is a benefit to having “national” in the concept of service. They support the involvement of the federal government as the provider of an infrastructure under which service activities can be funded, promoted and organized. Grantmakers support the involvement of the President of the United States—as both Presidents Bush and Clinton have done in recent years—and want his leadership in articulating a vision for America that includes service as a core American value.

From the perspective of grantmakers, service can and should be a part of the American experience,
performed by as many people as possible, and can and should be performed on both a part- and full-time basis. Service is of profound value to American society in all of its manifestations. There is a need and an argument for multi-sector support of service, including federal funding of a large-scale national program. In the absence of federal support, grantmakers express concern that service opportunities would be determined situationally, according to local government capacity to fund or indigenous philanthropic resources and wealth.

Do Stipends Corrupt the Value of Service?

From the perspective of grantmakers, stipends—which are not seen by grantmakers as comparable to the wages that participants could earn in other full-time employment—are one way of expanding access to service opportunities to people who otherwise would be prevented from participating by virtue of having limited personal resources. Performing service yields benefits on several levels. First, the individual performing the service benefits by learning the power of the individual to make a difference through personal contribution and responsibility. Second, the recipients of the service benefit from positive changes effected at a personal or community level. And third, the community benefits—that is community writ-small, as in local, and writ-large, as in society—from cultivating an ethos of giving among its citizens that will likely last a lifetime. The multiple beneficiaries of service lead many grantmakers to the conclusion that extending the opportunity to serve is of first priority, even if it involves providing financial support to participants.

These positions reflect agreement as to the overall value of service as a civil society-building strategy. Moreover, service is recognized as a tool for addressing community problems and needs. No attempt was made by the Grantmaker Forum either in the interview process, or in its convenings, to reach consensus on the specific elements of the current national service program—AmeriCorps—nor has the Grantmaker Forum itself taken a position about what proportion of the program costs should be borne by federal rather than non-federal sources.

III. THE NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

To deepen its understanding of the political debate taking place as to the future of continued federal support of community and national service, the Grantmaker Forum, in collaboration with the Hudson Institute and the Progressive Policy Institute—two public policy “think tanks”—sponsored a National Symposium on Service in Washington, DC on July 17, 1996. The Symposium served as a “national conversation” that included disparate political perspectives. Its primary purpose was to surface the issues and clarify the philosophical differences among participants in order to seek some common ground across the political spectrum.

According to Dr. Leslie Lenkowsky, President of the Hudson Institute, the Symposium was designed to examine two fundamental questions: “What is the potential of national and community service for addressing the nation’s problems, and what can government do to foster it?”

The Symposium served as a “national conversation” that included disparate political perspectives. Its primary purpose was to surface the issues and clarify the philosophical differences among participants in order to seek some common ground across the political spectrum.
The National Symposium included Panel discussions on the following topics:

- Community and National Service: Not Just Another Government Program
- Making National Service a Catalyst for Civic Enterprise
- Redesigning National and Community Service
- Striking a New Bargain

Each Panel deliberately included individuals representing opposing points of view. The Grantmaker Forum’s goal was to attempt to bridge philosophical differences about the role of government by engaging panelists in discussions about the specific value, purpose and applications of service activities. By bringing people together to discuss differences that are practical in nature—i.e., what service is and what service does—the Grantmaker Forum hoped to transcend differences that are philosophical, theoretical or partisan in nature.

The Grantmaker Forum sponsored the National Symposium in search of common ground, understanding that to find common ground is to build common ground, through communication and dialogue, through an exchange of ideas and experiences, through the cultivation of shared expectations. Common ground emerged during the course of the Symposium. No matter one’s particular political view, service was understood to be a positive activity—a strategy for achieving positive outcomes for individuals and communities.

IV. Purpose of This Paper

This paper presents the key issues of consensus and contention around community and national service. It includes, when possible, a discussion of the barriers to progress on the expansion of community and national service programs. The Grantmaker Forum presents these issues in order to continue the dialogue begun by the Symposium.

Chapter V. of this paper includes a summary of the actual proceedings from each Panel. Each Panel summary includes a section titled, “Commentary” which presents the implications of the discussion from the philanthropic perspective.

The Grantmaker Forum offers this documentation of the Symposium as a contribution to the debate about the future of community and national service in America, hoping to clarify the issues at stake—offering definitions when necessary and pointing out compromises when possible.
V. Session Summaries

Panel #1

Community and National Service: Not Just Another Government Program

Key Questions:
- What can service reasonably accomplish?
- If service is about people assuming responsibility for addressing problems within their communities, what role does the federal government have in fostering and financing opportunities to serve?

Panelists

The first panel included Michael Brown, President and Co-Founder of Boston-based City Year; Will Marshall, President of the Progressive Policy Institute; Adam Meyerson, Vice President for Educational Affairs and Editor of Policy Review at The Heritage Foundation; and John Walters, President of The New Citizenship Project. The Panel was moderated by Leslie Lenkowsky, Ph.D., President of the Hudson Institute.

Discussion

Dr. Lenkowsky led with the following question: “What potential does service—and define service any way you wish—have for solving our nation’s most critical domestic problems?” (The definition of service was left up to the respondents, and each Panelist defined the term differently. Therefore each had a different perspective on both its potential and purpose.)

Michael Brown, Director of City Year, a national service program that is supported with AmeriCorps funding, defined service differently from Meyerson. He stated, “Service is a commitment to something larger than oneself.” Brown argued that national service in its current incarnation, as AmeriCorps, is an alternative to government, not as

Adam Meyerson opened the discussion by describing the desperate conditions of our nation-state, citing a range of problems, including “an epidemic of child abuse, half a million children in foster care, public schools in inner cities that aren’t even teaching the basics . . . (and) the collapse of the safety net—the family.” He went on: “The answer is to go back to the principles that built this country, and that’s freedom with responsibility. It’s self-government. It’s citizenship.” Meyerson addressed himself specifically to AmeriCorps in response to the more general question concerning service as an idea. “AmeriCorps promotes government irresponsibility,” he asserted, “because it further diffuses the responsibility. Who is really in charge?”

Underlying Meyerson’s perspective is the belief that the problems of society are only exacerbated by a federal government that seeks to address problems with programs rather than a government that fosters solutions at the most local level by compelling its citizens to take responsibility for fixing what’s broken in their own communities. Meyerson supported idea of engaging in service on one’s own volition, but took issue with the notion that government should create a program—in this case AmeriCorps—to accomplish that objective. Real service, Meyerson argued, is everything government is not; it’s oxymoronic to think that government can “run service” because by definition, service is about individuals, not government, taking personal responsibility. “Service can mean worship at your Church or Synagogue or Mosque; and business can be service,” Meyerson argued. “It’s service to run a soup kitchen for the homeless, but it’s also service to be a McDonald’s franchise.”

Meyerson stated, an extension of it. “The era of big government is over,” said Brown. “We must replace big government with big citizenship where people are asked to be the resources to solve problems.” Brown’s view of service is that it is a strategy for “getting things done,” and that government functions as a catalyst by providing resources and organization. Service can be
performed with the help of government, argued Brown, but service is not performed by government. “It’s important for government to serve as an investor (in service) and a multiplier—to convene and at the same time to inspire groups to come forward and create programs.”

Will Marshall of the Progressive Policy Institute described service in very concrete terms when he said that service is what a citizen does for society in exchange for what society does for the citizen. He contended that there should be “an expectation of an obligation to serve in exchange for the receipt of public benefits.” From this standpoint, service represents one condition of the “social contract.”

Picking up on this point, the Moderator asked Panelists whether service can transform government’s relationship to its citizens by shifting the paradigm from one of entitlement to one of mutual obligation? Marshall responded that citizens can and should be encouraged to change their view of government and that society has an interest in encouraging citizens to ask, “What is my responsibility for solving problems?” According to Marshall, the corollary question that government should ask itself is, “How can the resources of government be used to enable individuals and communities to move on their (own) problems?” Marshall’s perspective on this issue is consistent with how President Clinton has described the challenges of the 21st century, to build a society that “provides opportunity to all and expects responsibility from all.”

The framing of the issue in this way led the Panel to confront a most basic question: “Does government have a role in promoting a new relationship between itself and its citizens?” John Walters argued

Immediately following the Panel discussion, the Moderator solicited questions and comments from the audience. Without summarizing every question made during this period, it is worth noting that two members of the audience commented on the need for research on what works and why. Members of the audience argued that knowing that a particular program

that government has already over-reached its capacity to be effective, and that it would be in everyone’s best interest if government simply withdrew from social problem-solving and left the communities that comprise the nation to solve their own problems with their own ingenuity and resources. Walters asserted that the ethic of service is developed and cultivated at the local not the national level. As a political theorist, Walters criticized Brown’s view that government should invest in service, arguing that such thinking leads to “a kind of dependence on the government.”

The current paradigm is flawed, argued Walters. “Somebody brings forward a problem and what does government do? It creates a program.” From Walters’ perspective, service is an issue that should not be addressed either by or in Washington. It is a concept of citizen power that is best realized at the community level without the interference of government of any kind.

Walters posed a challenge to proponents of community and national service, saying, “I would have more respect for the people pushing (AmeriCorps) if they would say, ‘Look. We’re going to take money out of the social welfare programs and direct it into volunteerism.’ I mean real money, billions and billions of dollars.” Walters was suggesting that if service is a viable strategy for community problem-solving, then we should eliminate the existing network of government-run social services, and reinvest in service initiatives.

Audience Questions

approach can be relied upon to achieve predictable outcomes is useful, regardless of who is funding the program. Dr. Tom Smith of Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) in Philadelphia described the findings from a study he had conducted of AmeriCorps. Some programs are “innovative,” he noted, while others are less compelling in their design and impact. The real
issue, from Dr. Smith’s perspective, is one of definition. What is meant by service, and what is the difference between service and a “jobs program” or simply work experience? Panelists agreed about the need for standards and research, but good research is costly and resources are limited. Moreover, service itself includes a range of activities. It is a complex program with multiple objectives; it is not easy to grasp or define, even by those in the field.

**Commentary from the Philanthropic Perspective**

This Panel’s discussion lived up to the Grantmaker Forum’s expectations in that it illuminated the different perspectives on service and made clear that the disagreements over specifics may well be microcosms of a larger dispute. What constitutes the obligation of the individual to society and the obligation of society to the individual? The current political trend toward the smallest unit of analysis—from the federal to the state, to the local, to the community, to the neighborhood, to the block, and to the individual—is evident in policy and funding shifts with state and community block grants substituting for programs that have historically been organized at the national level.

The political and philosophical ground that underlies American society, and in particular, citizen expectations of government, is in flux. There is a move away from a view that emphasizes the power and responsibility of the nation as a whole—a nation that is greater than the sum of its parts and that has an obligation to care for the needs of individuals who are not capable of caring for themselves—to a view that emphasizes the power and responsibility of the individual.

The Grantmaker Forum consists of funders, many of whom have long financed service programs. The Grantmaker Forum has developed a framework for distinguishing community service from other activities such as job training or employment. The Grantmaker Forum’s approach to service reflects support for service as an ethic of a civilized society whereby one develops a sense of responsibility for oneself and one’s community. In this way, service is understood to have important value to individuals, communities and society as a whole.

Somewhere between William Marshall’s vision that service can redefine the relationship between the nation and its citizens and Adam Meyerson’s view that government’s failures renders it incapable of taking on any new responsibilities, lies a widely-held conviction that service can achieve positive outcomes for both individuals to represent his or her own best interest with a minimal expectation of a government “safety net.” This is well reflected in the following comments made by John Walters of the New Citizenship Project. “We have to tell people, it’s your responsibility to talk about self-help and self-reliance . . . I am saying in this kind of discussion there’s a tendency to forget the core issue of citizenship and personal responsibility that ultimately means you have to sometimes say a hard and unpopular message, which is: it’s your job to watch your kids; it’s your job to make sure they get a good education; it’s your job to behave and obey the law; and it’s your job to be a participant in your community and make it a better place and not be a free rider.” This approach to building a civil society emphasizes the role of the individual and the importance of personal responsibility.

Along a continuum of support for a concept, one might encounter profound philosophical differences that impede progress toward a shared objective. The first Panel demonstrated that it was possible to agree on the objective of expanding citizen participation through service, but disagree on what constitutes service. Is it possible and preferable to better define the terminology of the field and to be more explicit about expectations? While there may be benefits to having an approach to service that is inclusive, it becomes difficult to achieve broad consensus on a national model of service without getting more specific about what is meant by service—what constitutes a service experience and what are reasonable outcomes for those who serve?
the individual and the community involved. The first Panel left its participants with an increased appreciation of the need for more conversation, not less; for more opportunities to share frustrations and hopes, not fewer. Only through a sustained dialogue can we attain a better understanding about what has failed and what is possible in a nation that is as much challenged as it is enriched by the complexity of its dissonance.

The second Panel began where the first Panel left off, with acknowledged consensus on the value of associational activity and civic engagement, and contention over the role of government in promoting or catalyzing that engagement.

### Panel #2

**Making National Service a Catalyst For Civic Enterprise**

**Key Questions:**

- If the goal is to conceive of service as more than a federally funded program, then how can we use the federally funded infrastructure to coordinate, promote and enable grassroots-level activities that include both funded and unfunded service and volunteer efforts?

- How can federal government resources be used more effectively to nurture service opportunities in communities that lack the capacity or initiative to do it on their own?

**Panelists**

This Panel included

**Fred Ailes**, Deputy Chief of Police, Montgomery County (Maryland) Department of Police; **Amitai Etzioni**, Ph.D., of George Washington University; **Michael Gerson**, Policy Director for Senator Dan Coats, a Republican of Indiana; and **William C. Myers**, Senior Fellow at the Progress and Freedom Foundation. The session was moderated by **William A. Galston**, Ph.D., Director of the Institute for Philanthropy and Public Policy, Executive Director of The National Commission on Civic Renewal, and Professor at the School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland. Dr. Galston is also the former Assistant to President Clinton for Domestic Policy.

**Discussion**

Fred Ailes described his experience with the AmeriCorps program. The Department applied for and received AmeriCorps funding that enabled them to sponsor 37 program members. Recruited from the community and representing all ages and ethnicities, these “volunteers” were trained and supervised by...
Police Department professionals. They were sent out to work in the community on crime-reduction activities, and specifically, to expand the Department's victim assistance efforts. After hearing the program description, Dr. Galston, the Panel's Moderator, asked the Panelists to comment and reflect on the description and specifically address themselves to the following: "Is this an appropriate and legitimate partnership involving the public sector at the federal level and the public sector and civil sector at the community level, or does it in some way cross a line that ought not to be crossed?"

In essence, Dr. Galston was asking the Panelists to consider whether this application of federal dollars to local problem-solving makes sense for society as a whole, in addition to whether it is a meaningful experience for program members and the community that receives the service.

William Myers of the Progress and Freedom Foundation noted that the program sounded like a "good partnership," but wondered if the same goals might not have been achieved by "funding 37 minimum wage workers," with private or state funding rather than federal AmeriCorps dollars. Myers went on to say that the "great achievement that it appears that Montgomery County (was) getting was . . . an infrastructure. They're actually using their volunteers to catalyze a permanent solution to problems rather than a temporary solution to a particular problem."

On the other hand, Myers himself later argued that "national service can destroy community activism" because communities become complacent as government encroaches on what have traditionally been "civic" responsibilities and obligations. Myers offered an historical observation: "Our founding fathers were very bright. They said, 'Provide for the common defense, put soldiers in the field, but promote the general welfare.' That's . . . what government ought to be doing is promoting the institutions of civil society which can . . . solve a lot of these problems."

The Moderator pressed Ailes about the use of federal funding to achieve local objectives. Given Ailes' endorsement of the program and the value of the program to the community, he asked, "Why didn't the county, in partnership with the state or some other local force, bring this into being and provide the resources needed (on its own)?" In reply, Ailes explained that the county needed the federal dollars; to his knowledge, there were no other resources available to be used in this way, and, "This is an area that we've always looked, I think, to the federal government to do . . . to provide these kinds of programs."

Myers responded to this exchange by asserting, "I absolutely buy into the premise that increased civic engagement is good. In fact," he said, "I think increased civic engagement and the reconstruction of our civil society is imperative . . . I am, however, suspicious of the instinct that says we have a problem; hence let's have a national program . . . You find it a little less now than you did a couple of years ago, but you still find it all over the place and you find it on both sides of the aisle . . . We look to Washington and we look to the federal government to sort of do these things. We should look to ourselves."

Michael Gerson of Senator Coats' office jumped into the discussion about the need to limit the role of government. He stated that, "the retreat of government is going to lead to social dislocation . . . so we are faced not with a theoretical problem but a very urgent practical problem." Gerson's point was that it may not be reasonable to assume equal capacity in communities across the nation to carry out programs or take responsibility for problems. "In some communities there is a civic infrastructure that can take care of (those) problems, that's capable . . . In other communities the civic infrastructure has been decimated by both culture and government; and in those cases, I think you are going to have real human suffering." Gerson was concerned that political rhetoric would detract from acknowledging and dealing with the consequences of a devolution approach to
governance. He believes in devolution but admits that
there is a cost to reducing government involvement that
should not be under-estimated. “How do you help the
institutions of civil society without corrupting them?” he asked. Gerson proposed the possibility of
“privatizing” AmeriCorps and providing government
funded incentives for citizens to make charitable
contributions to support the program.

Dr. Amitai Etzioni approached the issue of
volunteerism from a much broader perspective,
reaching far beyond the confines of AmeriCorps as a
program, to the notion of volunteerism as a movement
of American democracy. He suggested that “every
agency submit to an annual or maybe biannual
volunteering audit,” whereby agencies would be
expected, as part of the overall emphasis on
“reinventing government,” to describe how they are
using or intend to use citizens to help them get their
jobs done. “You have an image of a three legged stool
in which the government leg is too long and the
community is too short, and you want to balance it
rather than chop off one of (the legs). You come to the
question of which specific missions or which specific
parts of the mission can you civilize?” Dr. Etzioni
suggested that this is a better way to address the issue of
government encroachment than simply suspending
government efforts and relying wholly and abruptly on
citizen participation. Dr. Etzioni further argued the
importance of having systems and structures to use
volunteers, and not to assume that free labor, by itself,
without training, support or supervision will be a
panacea for all of society's ills.

Another audience member stated her belief
that national service in the form of AmeriCorps, is a
“volunteer generator or volunteer multiplier.”
AmeriCorps members are frequently used, she
explained, to recruit, organize and lead young and
unpaid volunteers, and these activities at both levels of
stipended and un-stipended work, help to “restore civil
society.”

In both cases, the interest on the part of the
audience was to inform the Panelists about the practice
of service since so much of the discussion was focused
on the theory of service. This attempt to ground the
discussion in reality led the Moderator to ask Michael
Gerson and William Myers to comment on
AmeriCorps as a model, with program members
participating on a full-time basis with stipends. Neither
Gerson nor Myers had a problem with the concept of
stipended service, as evidenced by Gerson’s comment,
“I guess I don’t have any theoretical problem with the
concept of government providing inducements for
people to either give or serve.” And Myers agreed, “I
don’t really have a lot of problem in funding, through
government, volunteer activities.”

Audience Questions

At this point, the Moderator opened the
discussion to the audience. The first questioner was
Jeanne Bernard, Director of the Volunteer Services
Division of the Montgomery County Policy

“"We are indeed in a period of fundamental
questions about the role of government. We’re in a
period in which the Democratic President of the
United States has declared that the era of big
government is over. At roughly the same time, one
of the most thoughtful members of the late Bush
administration has called for the re-creation of the
Civilian Conservation Corps. Should the focus be
on entitlement? Should it be on reciprocity?"

William A. Galston, Ph.D.
University of Maryland

Department, who responded to Dr. Etzioni’s comment
about the need for systems and supports for volunteers.
She noted that national service is not by definition
about helping the poor; it is about “giving citizens the
opportunity to become involved in an effective
solution-oriented way . . . Volunteerism doesn’t
happen in a vacuum,” she said. “It must be carefully
managed. There must be a structure. There must be
opportunity. It must be evaluated. Volunteers must be
supervised and it takes resources to do that.”

Gerson and William Myers to comment on
AmeriCorps as a model, with program members
participating on a full-time basis with stipends. Neither
Gerson nor Myers had a problem with the concept of
stipended service, as evidenced by Gerson’s comment,
“I guess I don’t have any theoretical problem with the
concept of government providing inducements for
people to either give or serve.” And Myers agreed, “I
don’t really have a lot of problem in funding, through
government, volunteer activities.”

Commentary from the Philanthropic Perspective
From the Grantmaker Forum's perspective, several issues emerged during the second Panel discussion that demand further examination. There was considerable agreement among Panelists about the concept of a federally funded service program, even up to and including stipends for service, so long as the overall goal is to develop infrastructures that will support the generation and integration of unpaid volunteers. Some Panelists cautioned that a devolution approach to community problem-solving can easily overestimate the resources and capacity of communities to address their own problems; suggesting that indeed there may be problems in America that will only succumb to solutions crafted at the national level with federal support.

What this Panel made clear is that there is confusion among policy analysts about the difference between service as a national movement and service as a federally funded program. The Grantmaker Forum includes funders who support AmeriCorps as an experiment in service, as well as funders who support other service efforts that fall outside the Corporation’s purview. The Grantmaker Forum sees federal support of AmeriCorps as one investment in the promotion of volunteerism, community activism and civic engagement. But AmeriCorps does not define service for the Grantmaker Forum. This Panel suggests the need for all those who are involved in community and national service to expand their view; for the Corporation, as a representative of the federal government, to value alternative models and methods of service, and to promote volunteerism in all of its manifestations.

The Corporation for National Service could make a significant contribution to the field of service, beyond AmeriCorps, by using the information it collects from its own programs to help define outcomes for different models of service. The Corporation could potentially assume the role of national advocate for service, not defining service as just AmeriCorps, but defining service in its broadest sense—both paid and unpaid, organized and less organized, within and outside of education systems, involving old and young, faith-based and secular—as the notion of Americans contributing to the betterment of America.
Panel #3

Redesigning National and Community Service

Key Questions:
- Should the government require the performance of community service as a condition of eligibility for federally financed educational grants and loans?
- How can we craft a federally funded national service initiative that promotes service as a national and civic enterprise, and yet is grounded in communities and responsive to community needs?

Panelists

The third panel was moderated by Ed Kilgore of the Progressive Policy Institute-Democratic Leadership Council, and included Steve Waldman, Senior Advisor to the CEO of the Corporation for National Service; Reatha Clark King, Ph.D., President and Executive Director of the General Mills Foundation; William H. Lock, Executive Director of Community Enterprises of Greater Milwaukee; and Charles Moskos, Ph.D., of Northwestern University.

Discussion

Perhaps as a result of the title of this Panel, much of the discussion focused specifically on AmeriCorps as the paradigm to be modified, rejected, critiqued or accepted. Despite the Moderator’s efforts to address some of the larger questions facing service in terms of program design and purpose, the Panel tended to focus almost exclusively on AmeriCorps and not on service as a concept that could take many different forms. As he opened the discussion, the Moderator, Ed Kilgore, described how the morning sessions dealt with the most “basic questions about national and community service,” and avoided getting bogged down in what has been “partisan sniping over the AmeriCorps program” that has taken place in Congress. “This Panel,” explained Kilgore, “is intended to move into the basic design questions for a vigorous and effective national and community service initiative, assuming that there will be some national service initiative and that government has some role, however limited or however catalytic.” Kilgore asserted that AmeriCorps, as it currently exists, is not sacrosanct and is subject to reform for purposes of improvement.

Kilgore’s first question was addressed to Steve Waldman, representing the Corporation for National Service, and it was specific to the AmeriCorps model. “I’d like to ask Steve to talk a little bit about what the Corporation has learned about the basic design of national service. What works? What doesn’t?”

Waldman used the opportunity to rebut a comment that was made earlier in the day about the potential of a federally funded initiative to “extinguish the spirit of service,” and undermine local community empowerment and responsibility. “Some of the most effective and important uses of AmeriCorps members have been to work with, organize and harness the energy of traditional unpaid volunteers,” Waldman noted. “This has become one of the greatest success stories of national service.” To demonstrate his point, Waldman explained that, “every AmeriCorps member leverages another twelve unpaid volunteers.”

Waldman also wanted to clarify AmeriCorps’ relationship to faith-based organizations. Earlier in the day, Panelists had commented that some of the best volunteer work is being done by faith-based agencies, and that the Corporation is not allowed to support these programs. “Not so,” argued Waldman. “I can’t speak to other government programs, but some of the most effective AmeriCorps programs have been the ones where they’ve worked with religious or faith-based groups. Habitat for Humanity, Sisters of Notre Dame, National Council of Churches, Greater Dallas Community Churches, Notre Dame University, US Catholic Conference, Mennonite Housing Rehabilitation Project—these are just a few of the groups that AmeriCorps works with that have a religious orientation.”
Waldman indicated that the confusion about the role of federal dollars in support of faith-based programs derives from a fundamental misunderstanding about how the Corporation works and how AmeriCorps programs are staffed. The Corporation does not select AmeriCorps members. Unlike the Peace Corps or the Civilian Conservation Corps, AmeriCorps members are recruited and selected by local groups. This makes it possible for religious organizations to receive funding to select their own AmeriCorps volunteers. AmeriCorps members are restricted from participating in any religious activities as part of their AmeriCorps experience, but they can work for faith-based agencies.

With respect to a specific question posed by the Moderator about research and evaluation, Waldman talked primarily about the costs and benefits of service programs. “There are a lot of different ways of measuring what kind of effectiveness a program like this has, all of them rather imperfect,” he explained. “There have been five different independent studies that tried to look at the cost/benefit ratio of AmeriCorps. All of them have found a positive return in the range of $1.60 to $2.60 per dollar invested, and I think it’s fair to say that probably all of those underestimate the benefit because some of the benefits are simply not quantifiable.”

The Corporation for National Service has invested in trying to calculate the benefits of service by focusing on the AmeriCorps mantra, “Getting Things Done.” This has often meant, however, that program impact is reduced to a “bean-counter’s” analysis—how many meals were served, how many homes were built or how many counseling and testing appointments were made. Waldman acknowledged the shortcomings of the research that has been conducted to date. He noted the need for a longer-term approach to evaluation that helps the field of service set standards and expectations and gives programs guidance as to what qualifies as excellence. “When you do exit surveys of the (AmeriCorps) members on their way out of the program, one of the things they say is one of the most important impacts that it’s had on them is essentially building understanding of people who are different from themselves,” explained Waldman.

The Moderator then asked Dr. Reatha Clark King of the General Mills Foundation “what potential the foundation world sees in national service and how it’s affected the work . . . done with community service groups in the private sector?” Dr. Clark King responded that the philanthropic community is interested in maximizing its impact—using philanthropic dollars effectively and recognizing that philanthropy will never be a substitute for government: “I don’t want to just focus on AmeriCorps today . . . Beyond that, we are interested in youth development . . . We are distressed about the escalation of crime among youth . . . I would say that . . . we see national service (and) the impact on character development, development of young, as very important for the success of our work and our goals . . . We are trying to leverage other resources, personal involvement by people, and especially in the local communities that are affected by the problems, to make a difference on those problems.”

The Moderator wanted to know from Dr. Clark King how the foundation community perceives the notion of paid service or stipended service. “For the most part we feel that it is value added,” asserted Dr. Clark King. “Grantmakers on the whole feel that it is value added and leverage(s) some benefits that wouldn’t be there without it. Paying volunteers . . . certainly does not deter . . . our non-paid people to volunteer.”

Steve Waldman
Corporation for National Service
Dr. Clark King expressed the view that philanthropy has a broader vision of service that is consistent with its own long-term association with the field: “Maybe we could clear up the notion that unpaid volunteers don’t cost money. “The best agencies, the agencies that make the best use of volunteers, paid or unpaid, typically have a coordinator for those volunteers. This is an investment we (at General Mills) make freely... My guess is the Kellogg Foundation makes these kinds of grants too. We see the whole mix of volunteers across the years as promoting the habit of service in people and therefore, this investment of paying people... contributes to developing the habit of service that will continue over the years. We find that low income communities... typically are cash-starved,... and you get their attention because there’s some pay... But when you get them involved, they serve like heck. So let us not be discouraged because they’re going to be honest and own up to the fact that they are first attracted to it because of the money... When they get in there (they) benefit and grow.”

Last spring, Senator Grassley of Iowa and Harris Wofford, CEO of the Corporation for National Service, reached an agreement about a number of items, including the allocation of costs for AmeriCorps. At this point in the discussion, Ed Kilgore turned to William Lock, Executive Director of Community Enterprise of Greater Milwaukee. This program, according to Kilgore’s description, is “totally local... faith-based... (and) depends on a very hard-headed understanding of the economic problems of inner cities.” Community Enterprise does not receive funding from AmeriCorps, but it is funded through the local government for its economic and community development efforts. Lock noted the need for churches to be involved in any effort to address social problems. He described the church as “a tremendous latent power that should be included in any kind of model to address change in this country.” Kilgore commented that, “Bill Lock is describing the difference between an ethic of paternalism and an ethic of genuine empowerment of people, and that has to happen whether you’re talking about the public sector, the private sector, a national program, a local program, a foundation program, an AmeriCorps program or anything else.”

The last Panelist was Dr. Charles Moskos, a military sociologist who has studied both military and civilian service domestically and internationally. Kilgore asked Dr. Moskos a two-part question. First, “whether, in (his) experience, the sort of character-building or socialization function that the Armed Services have performed over the years for so many Americans... whether the national service movement is beginning to get a grip on really creating that kind of socialization process? And secondly, why is it that an idea that’s so amazingly popular when you actually talk to people has generated so many enemies and drawn so little public attention?”

Dr. Moskos replied that Kilgore’s question cuts to a fundamental paradox about the whole issue of...
national versus local service programs. “National youth service schemes and programs have visibility, recognition and popularity to the degree that they are federal and highly visible. Yet as we’re hearing today, we should move toward devolution, decentralization, toward more local and private agency forms of service. How can we do both?”

Dr. Moskos used a military analogy to make another important point about the purpose of service: “We don’t have an army or military (in order) to inoculate civic virtues into young men and women. That’s not why we have a military. We have it because presumably there’s an important job that they’re supported to do. If the work isn’t defined as important, then the transformational aspects are not going to occur.” This observation suggests that the nature and value of the work performed is at the heart of the issue, and that only if important work is assigned and accomplished, can service achieve its transformational potential.

Dr. Moskos offered the German civilian service corps as an example of an “indispensable” system of service. Germany uses civilian service as an alternative to military conscription. “The German system is very decentralized. Eight staff members at the federal level run 30,000 young men who go through the system annually. It’s a male only system because they only draft men.” In Germany, civilian service is dedicated primarily to supporting the nation’s elderly; civilian members provide in-home support to the elderly to avoid or postpone institutionalization. Germany estimates that each server saves the government approximately $35,000, based on an assumption that fewer seniors end up in government-funded institutions as a result of the home care they receive. Germany has retained military conscription even in this period of post–Cold War demilitarization, perhaps, in part, because they so deeply value the service performed by the conscientious objectors.

The nature and value of the service performed, Moskos argued, has been important from an historical standpoint as well. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) paid its enrollees $35 per month, most of which was actually sent back to the enrollee’s family. The reputation of the CCC is based not on how the individuals involved felt about their experience but rather on the productive work in which the Corps members were engaged—building highways, developing the nation’s infra-structure. All across the country there is evidence of the contributions made by the CCC.

With respect to AmeriCorps, Dr. Moskos expressed support for shifting the financial burden from the federal to the local level, with stipends paid by local governments and private philanthropy and with the federal government providing a post-service education award. This approach is consistent with and based on the GI Bill, reflecting the principle of providing a financial reward for national service. This quid pro quo approach, argued Dr. Moskos, has strong public support. He felt that a well organized civilian youth service initiative could help fill the gap that has been created by downsizing the American military. By providing training and health and education benefits, the armed services have historically been a vehicle by which people move from one socio-economic level to another. The growth of the underclass, Dr. Moskos suggested, is at least in part related to the abolishment of the draft.

Audience Questions

The Moderator opened the discussion to the audience. The first questioner was Jim Pitofsky with the National Association of Partners in Education. He expressed frustration with how the Panel discussion focused almost exclusively on AmeriCorps, without taking into account other forms of community and national service, such as foster grandparents, seniors companions, Retired Senior Volunteers or Learn and Serve America. Pitofsky asked the Panelists whether they were familiar with other forms of service, and then...
made the following statement: “As we debate today and as we debate in the days and years ahead, hopefully (we will) broaden our debate and give national and community service the breadth that it represents and the breadth that it deserves.”

The next audience member to speak was Art Naparstek from Cleveland, Ohio. Naparstek noted that: “In the future, a framework for this discussion (should) not be around what’s the role of government, but instead, how do we build strong community and **catalyze strong community** from the bottom up and in partnership with the private sector and with...”

This Panel’s title implies its intent to discuss ways of redesigning national and community service. But some of the Panelists, and most of the audience, had rejected the premise that AmeriCorps is the primary service paradigm. In order to propose a redesign, the Panel had to select a model of service and critique that model, its approach, its cost and its purpose. The problem is that by emphasizing AmeriCorps, an opportunity may have been missed to talk more globally about where service, in general, fits into society and who, across the sectors, should be involved in organizing, supporting and managing service programs. The Grantmaker Forum is committed to cultivating stronger **partnerships** across the public, private, independent and philanthropic sectors, and to use the strengths of each sector to **maximize** the number, quality and value of service programs. This perspective was best expressed by Dr. Reatha Clark King who indicated that the philanthropic community generally supports service and believes that there is an appropriate role for stipended service. At the same time, Dr. Clark King explained that support must come from more than just government, and we need an approach that involves, and has expectations for, the private and philanthropic sectors as partners in the process.

There is a need for more discussion on some of the issues raised by Dr. Moskos and Steve Waldman related to limiting federal expenditures to an education award only. The Grantmaker Forum takes the position that there may be value in allocating responsibility for program costs across the sectors, but before that...
**Panel #4**

**STRIKING A NEW BARGAIN**

**Panelists**

The original plan for the Symposium was that the final Panel would be the culmination of the day’s events; it would provide Washington policy-makers an opportunity to “strike a new bargain” with one another about the future of community and national service in America. As it turned out, due to a roll call on important legislative issues, the Members of Congress were unable to attend the Panel and were not present for much of the day’s discussion, though many of their staff observed the proceedings.

The original panelists included: Congressman Peter Hoekstra (R-Michigan), Congressman Joseph Kennedy (D-Massachusetts), Congressman Chris Shays (R-Connecticut), and Harris Wofford.

**Discussion**

Nick Bollman, the Moderator, explained that the Panel would begin with a presentation by Senator Wofford, summarizing the day’s events with responses from Dr. Lenkowsky and Mr. Marshall and then an opportunity for audience participation.

Senator Wofford opened the session by talking about his vision of service as an attempt to “crack the atom of civic power” and release the power to solve the problems of our country.” He went on to describe the need for Democrats and Republicans to collaborate on problem-solving, using as many creative strategies as possible to achieve our collective interests and objectives. “It’s the twin engine argument that George Romney was making so powerfully to his Republican colleagues before he died; that you need the twin engines of unpaid massive good-will, occasional volunteering, plus, it’s the second engine of full-time service, organized in a variety of ways,” asserted Wofford. This statement summed up Senator Wofford’s predisposition to using full-time stipended service, paid for in part by government, as a means of generating, organizing and supervising unpaid volunteers to do good work in neighborhoods across the nation. Senator Wofford argued against one particular model of service, asserting instead that we should use the opportunity provided by AmeriCorps as a chance to understand what works and why, not to confine ourselves to one approach or one model of service, but to better grasp the ingredients of success.

Marshall responded to Wofford’s remarks, saying, “Harris offers a compelling charge, which is to lift our sights above any programmatic expression of service to the broader enterprise of how to stitch the pieces together so that they begin to realize the promise.

**Key Question:**

- How do we pursue the goal of expanding opportunities to serve without succumbing to partisan politics?

The newly configured final Panel included **Nick Bollman**, Program Officer at The James Irvine Foundation as Moderator; Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National Service and former US Senator from Pennsylvania, **Harris Wofford; Leslie Lenkowsky**, Ph.D., President of the Hudson Institute; and **Will Marshall**, President of the Progressive Policy Institute.
that we’ve been talking about all day long, to really transform the society.” Marshall confessed to being a long-time skeptic about the effectiveness of using full-time stipended service providers to catalyze hordes of unpaid volunteers. But, he said, based on what he had heard during the course of the day both from the audience and the Panelists, he was changing his mind. Marshall also noted his surprise in learning from the day’s discussion that people are both for and against national service for the same reasons.

Conservatives express skepticism about government in general and most definitely about the federal government’s ability to do anything well. This distrust of government is shared by Democrats, explained Marshall; a motivation for members of the Democratic Leadership Council to promote national service as an alternative to government systems was its capacity to decentralize problem-solving. Many conservatives argue that the nation needs to renew its emphasis on “health and the prerogative and the autonomy of the independent or civic sphere, to develop a more civil society.” And again, explained Marshall, this is the same philosophy that underlies progressive Democrats’ support of service—the idea of revitalizing volunteerism and strengthening local community engagement and citizen problem-solving. Conservatives speak of the need to cultivate a new ethic of self-reliance and personal responsibility, while Democrats are simultaneously arguing that national service can develop a sense of personal responsibility in the context of community responsibility.

“You’re left with a sort of a vague, anti-government impulse that underlies so many of the objectives to what we’re trying to do here today . . . You have a kind of ideological impulse up against solid empirical evidence that it’s working, that we’re generating great civic value here, that we’re meeting the ‘Moskos test’ that the servers are doing work that wouldn’t otherwise be done, and if we took them away, communities would miss them,” Marshall asserted. He talked again of the paradox that had been referenced earlier: “We want to be decentralized and we want to devolve responsibility. We want to let communities determine the tasks that they think are most important. At the same time, we want to make this enterprise central to some of the core problems facing the country.”

Perhaps, Marshall claimed, the policy implication of this realization is that we should think about fewer tasks for national service, national tasks, but tasks that are common to all localities and therefore can be tackled at the community level.” He also raised a question about funding national service, saying that the Corporation for National Service has already decided to try to shift some of the burden of financing the program away from national and federal resources to local private and public sources. And he asked, “Can we look forward to the day where the federal contribution shrinks and shrinks as communities take on the task of really paying for full-time servers with the federal government basically focusing its resources on the education side of the equation, on the post-service benefit rather than the up-front costs? How far can we move in this direction? These are the kinds of items we ought to be putting on the agenda to debate as we look to the program’s future.”

Dr. Lenkowsky responded to Marshall’s statements, and offered some of his own reflections on the events of the day. “In thinking about national service, we are confronted with thinking about a moving target.” Dr. Lenkowsky noted that he had heard national service described as a way for government to finance higher education. He had also heard that service is a way of “dealing with some of the nation’s most critical social problems,” pointing out how this approach harkens back to what he believes to be a discredited federally funded program called the Community Action Program. A third version of national service about which he had heard at the Symposium was service as a strategy for achieving empowerment and the idea that through service,
different people would become more engaged in their community and their community lives. And fourth, Dr. Lenkowsky said he’d heard service discussed was as a means of achieving personal transformation.

“Part of the problem is . . . that throughout the debate over national service, going back several decades now, there has always been this sort of shifting terrain, and it makes it very difficult for someone . . . to figure out what it is that we are talking about.” Dr. Lenkowsky blamed the confusion and even the acrimony that has dominated Washington on the subject of service on the absence of dialogue and common language. He asserted the need for more conversation and communications to clarify terminology and nail down expectations.”

**Audience Questions**

The next and last comment came from Dr. Linda Forsyth, Executive Director of the California Commission on Improving Life Through Service, who, building on Dr. Kielsmeier’s comment, noted how AmeriCorps is working with schools in California and is successful on all counts, including improving school performance and student outcomes. Senator Wofford suggested that the next great challenge will be to develop a comprehensive system by which we can evaluate service in all of its incarnations, as a strategy for accomplishing multiple objectives.

Marshall echoed this theme in his closing remarks. “I hope that we do not lose the sense that this is a great civic experiment, that national service and related forms of service are not programmatic monuments to be frozen in place as they were originally conceived . . . but that we keep the pressure on ourselves . . . to keep measuring the actual experience of service . . . against the large and various purposes that we’ve tried to freight this enterprise with.”

**Commentary from the Philanthropic Perspective**

The Members of Congress did not have an opportunity at the Symposium to “strike a new bargain,” but those of us who did participate learned that the conflicts that had stalled progress on service in Washington arose, in part, from a lack of communication. The Symposium established a basis for improved communication that might indeed lead to striking a new and better bargain.

We learned about the need for and importance of dialogue—how throughout the day, people’s minds were opened, and even changed, as a result of the discussions that had taken place. We learned that more common ground existed than one might have imagined given the combative nature of the Washington debate about the future of service. Will Marshall’s observation that people were both for and against national service for the same reasons points to the need for policy makers to have more opportunity to talk in a depoliticized environment where the goal is to better understand one another, not to win or to lose an argument or a vote. Dr. Lenkowsky helped us identify at least four different “versions of national service” that were discussed during the course of the day and made us all the more aware of the need for common language and the ambiguity of our terminology. And Senator Wofford acknowledged the importance of remaining open and flexible in our approach to service while at the same time committing ourselves to standards and outcomes—measuring effectiveness, evaluating impact,
demonstrating the value of our efforts and justifying the cost. In sum, Senator Wofford argued that we hold ourselves accountable for producing meaningful results for America.

VI. CONCLUSION

From the perspective of the Grantmaker Forum, the Symposium helped locate and cultivate the fertile ground that is needed to break the bottleneck that has so corrupted dialogue around the future of community and national service in America. The Symposium provided an opportunity for different viewpoints to be aired so that the consistencies and the contradictions could be better understood. What do we mean by service? Who performs service? To what end is service performed? How exactly does service relate to civility? How does the federal government promote and support civic virtues without encroaching on community?

The Grantmaker Forum was founded by grantmakers and program and policy analysts who share a belief in the value of service and who also share a belief in the role of multi-sector partnership to support an expansion of service opportunities. The Symposium helped to reaffirm the Grantmaker Forum’s commitment to shared responsibility and helped clarify the difficulties of achieving partnership with the federal government and the private sector. For service, this will mean finding appropriate roles and responsibilities so that each partner—the public, private or philanthropic sector—can make its best contribution, leverage its knowledge and its resources, and contribute its experience and capacity to the benefit of society as a whole.

The future of service in America depends on our ability to weave the concept into our daily lives—to make the notion of performing service a part of our “coming of age” in American society. With the establishment of AmeriCorps, we are at risk of equating the ethic of service with a program; service is much more than a program. The roots of service are planted in the history of this nation, and grow from a time when, in the absence of a strong central government, people were expected to do for themselves and for their neighbors. The self-reliance that grew from these experiences forms the basis of the “can do” spirit that defines America. This spirit is invigorated, not replaced by, program efforts. In sponsoring the Symposium on Service, the Grantmaker Forum aimed to find common ground—ground that would support a multi-sector cooperative effort to integrate service, in all of its manifestations, to the benefit of our communities and our nation.

The July 17th Symposium helped to achieve a new level of dialogue about the theory and practice of service—a dialogue across the political spectrum that helps bridge differences to achieve a new appreciation of what brings us all together as Americans.
Appendix A

REMARKS OF SENATOR SAM NUNN

Senator Sam Nunn (D-Georgia) retired from the United States Senate in 1996.
The following is a transcript of remarks he made during the luncheon
at the National Symposium.

Thank you, Al, for introducing me, and for your own strong involvement in the national service movement over the years. Al’s daughter Sarah, a Junior at Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, is on the Maryland Commission for National and Community Service. So for Al From, national service is not just a good idea—it’s a family value.

I want to thank the Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service for making this event possible, and for your membership’s deep involvement in its topic.

I also want to thank the Progressive Policy Institute and the Hudson Institute not only for sponsoring this important conference, but also for proving once again that political thinkers from the Left and the Right can converge on sound public policies, not in the mushy middle of the road, but at the vital center of civic life.

This distinction between the middle and the center is not just a matter of semantics, and is essential to the purpose of today’s conference.

For reasons we all know well, this country’s current national and community service initiative has become caught in a crossfire between Left and Right.

For the last two years, some of us in Congress have argued long and hard to defend the Corporation for National Service, and its centerpiece AmeriCorps program, as a sound investment and an important experiment. Others of us have sought to kill both outright. Some AmeriCorps critics have identified real shortcomings and administrative excesses, and AmeriCorps supporters have conceded the point and assisted in their correction.

Above all, the crossfire has been intensified by the President’s personal embrace of AmeriCorps as a signature initiative of his Administration. Not surprisingly, its continued existence has been repeatedly held hostage by Republicans, in an odd sort of back-handed compliment to its importance, to create leverage on negotiations involving the entire range of national policy.

It is not too much to say that the partisan debate on national service in this Congress has been less than candid on either side. Those of us who support AmeriCorps have been too busy keeping it alive to air our own thoughts about its future direction. Those of us who opposed it were driven to abolitionist extremes they almost certainly did not believe by the extraordinary value of the death threat.

There are two obvious ways out of the partisan impasse on national service, other than total victory by one side or the other. The first and most obvious is to meet in the mushy middle, and split the difference between the current AmeriCorps and no AmeriCorps—to reduce funding and eliminate the more controversial aspects of the current program, giving each side a small victory and preserving a small but living hostage for future fights. That sort of compromise was in fact reached earlier this year through the good offices of my Senate colleague Chuck Grassley and Corporation for National Service Chairman Harris Wofford.
While any compromise on this issue is important and welcome, the purpose of this Conference is to stimulate a very different kind of convergence from the Left and the Right—a real discussion of the potential of national service in which the AmeriCorps experience provides critical evidence—but not an exclusive frame of reference.

The first step towards a “new bargain” on national and community service must be made from both sides—not towards the mushy middle, but towards the center where serious people discuss serious ideas separate from the context of partisan politics or prearranged positions.

The step that must be taken by those on the Left that have supported national service may not seem like too great a leap, but it does require decisive movement.

It means recognizing that AmeriCorps is not the personification of national service, but simply the latest effort to apply the very old idea of asking Americans to give something back to their country and then rewarding their service with the opportunity to pursue higher education.

It means taking seriously national service’s underlying ethic of mutual obligation between citizens and their government—even if that raises uncomfortable questions about student financial aid programs that are not based on service or merit.

It also means taking seriously national service’s potential as a way to address our country’s most pressing social problems that could compare favorably with your favorite government programs.

And it means remembering that Bill Clinton did not embrace national service because he was looking for a new government program he could call his own—but because as a candidate for President in 1992, every time he talked about it, against the advice of his campaign consultants, Americans stood up and cheered.

The plain truth that liberal defenders of AmeriCorps must accept is this: if you treat national service as just another fine federal program in a long line reaching across the Catalogue of Domestic Assistance and reaching back to the New Deal and the Great Society—then that is all it will ever become.

If your support for national service is conditioned on an assurance that it will not compete for resources with other programs that affect young people, provide financial aid for college, or address social problems, then it will never develop beyond its current size and scope.

And if you insist that national service must be structured as it is today so as to respect deals cut three years ago among youth services providers, public sector unions, federal agencies and Congressional committees, then you cannot much complain if conservatives dismiss the whole idea as the product of a bygone era.

Ultimately, the step supporters of national service on the Left must take is to understand that this initiative can be suffocated by its friends just as surely as it can be executed by its enemies. Overcoming both risks requires a step to the center—and then we may achieve a new bargain.

The step that conservative opponents of national service should take may seem like a giant leap to those who have savored John Walters’ attacks on AmeriCorps. For John Walters himself, it may require a Michael Jordan–style twisting move from the foul line. But from a philosophical point of view, it may not require much movement at all, other than ascending to a higher and clearer perspective.

As a veteran of many years of Senate debate on national service, I am tempted to once again respond to conservative critics on their own terms.
I could respond to charges that national service participants are paid to sit around campfires and sing “Kum Ba Yah” by telling you many stories from my state or yours about the work they actually do, from creating neighborhood watch systems, to rebuilding public parks, to teaching children and adults how to read, to visiting and caring for the home-bound elderly.

I could answer the claim that national service threatens to undermine “true” volunteerism by quoting many leaders of national nonprofit groups on how paid volunteers helped them increase the number of unpaid volunteers participating in their efforts. I could tell you about my own daughter, who runs a volunteer organization called Hands On Atlanta that reached new heights after becoming part of AmeriCorps.

I could point out that national service represents a triple investment in our young people with three separate payoffs: in the impact on their lives of serving others, in the value of the service they perform to their communities, and in the increased education and skills they will obtain from the post-service benefit they earn.

I could then point out that every negative assessment of the cost-benefit ratio of national service ever done invariably compares the total cost to only one of these three benefits—not always the same one, but never more than one.

I could ask you if your opposition to national service means that you would have opposed the GI Bill after World War II—now recognized almost universally as one of the best investments this country ever made, even though all of the service performed by its beneficiaries was completed before the first dollar was appropriated.

I could even poke a little fun at conservative politicians who will make a speech one day attacking national service on grounds that subsistence payments or educational benefits “taint” the spirit of voluntarism, and then make a speech the next day supporting higher pay and larger educational benefits for members of the all-volunteer military.

I could make these arguments today, but we don't really have the time.

Instead, I would like to challenge conservatives on a different, and higher ground.

Allow me to make several propositions about the problems and opportunities facing America that I believe most conservatives would share.

The most important threat to America’s future today is not military or economic, but moral—and it comes not from beyond the seas, but from within our cities, our families, and even our hearts, in the decline of the civic institutions that once transmitted our values and raised our children.

In part because of the blessings of peace, young Americans are in danger of growing up without knowing what it means to serve their country or their community—or what it means to work in a disciplined environment with other young people from different backgrounds.

Big government programs are no longer helping us make progress against the social ills associated with poverty and blighted communities—and may now be making things actually worse.

America’s civic sector—our churches and charities, our volunteer organizations and neighborhood groups—deserve public support as the most effective agencies for positive social change.

America’s ability to compete in an information age economy may well depend on the percentage of our young people who secure the best and highest possible education.
Most of our country’s political ills—chronic budget deficits, high taxes, resistance to change in government bureaucracies, and pork-barrel spending—come from the belief that you can get “something for nothing,” instead of earning opportunities with hard work.

America’s deepest problem is at bottom spiritual—many of us no longer believe in our country’s special place in history enough to sacrifice to keep it strong and free.

Suppose I told you of a concept that could respond to all seven of these propositions at the same time—that could express our moral and civic values, give young people the opportunity to learn patriotism and discipline, replace top-down bureaucracies with bottom-up problem-solving, strengthen our civic institutions, provide more opportunity for higher education, substitute mutual obligation for “something for nothing,” and tap our deepest resources of energy and spirit.

Would you be willing to experiment, and even to devote some federal dollars, to give this concept a chance to work? And if not, then what if anything in a federal budget of one point five trillion dollars is really worth undertaking?

This is the challenge I pose to my conservative friends: the concept is national service, and beginning today, I hope you will take the opportunity to think long and hard about how we can further it as an experiment with a great bearing on America’s future.

If those on the Left and those on the Right will take the step necessary to join a real debate on national service, then I am convinced a new bargain will be in sight.

Just take one step to the center. Thank you.
Appendix B

Panelists

Panel 1: Community and National Service: Not Just Another Government Program

Panelists
Michael Brown
President and Co-Founder, City Year
Will Marshall
President, Progressive Policy Institute
Adam Meyerson
Vice President for Educational Affairs, and Editor of Policy Review, The Heritage Foundation
John Walters
President, New Citizenship Project

Moderator
Leslie Lenkowsky, Ph.D.
President, Hudson Institute

Panel 2: Making National Service a Catalyst for Civic Enterprise

Panelists
Lieutenant Colonel Fred Ailes
Deputy Chief of Police, Montgomery County (Maryland) Department of Police
Amitai Etzioni, Ph.D. Professor, George Washington University; Founder, Communitarian Network
Michael Gerson
Policy Director, Senator Dan Coats
William C. Myers
Senior Fellow, Progress and Freedom Foundation

Moderator
William A. Galston, Ph.D.
Director, Institute for Philanthropy and Public Policy; Executive Director, The National Commission on Civic Renewal; Professor, School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland

Panel 3: Redesigning National and Community Service

Panelists
Reatha Clark King, Ph.D.
President and Executive Director, General Mills Foundation
William H. Lock
Executive Director, Community Enterprises of Greater Milwaukee
Charles Moskos, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Sociology, Northwestern University
Steve Waldman
Senior Advisor to the CEO, Corporation for National Service

Moderator
Ed Kilgore
Political Director, Progressive Policy Institute-Democratic Leadership Council

Panel 4: Striking the New Bargain

Panelists
Leslie Lenkowsky, Ph.D.
President, Hudson Institute
Will Marshall
President, Progressive Policy Institute
Harris Wofford
Chief Executive Officer, Corporation for National Service

Moderator
Nick Bollman
Program Officer, The James Irvine Foundation