

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 6560

To mobilize individuals in the United States in the fight against coronavirus by expanding volunteer opportunities in AmeriCorps, expanding employment opportunities at the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and utilizing the expertise of Peace Corps volunteer leaders whose service ended on March 15, 2020, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 21, 2020

Mr. GARAMENDI (for himself, Mr. RUSH, Ms. HAALAND, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. HUFFMAN, Mr. CASTEN of Illinois, and Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor, and in addition to the Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure, and Foreign Affairs, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To mobilize individuals in the United States in the fight against coronavirus by expanding volunteer opportunities in AmeriCorps, expanding employment opportunities at the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and utilizing the expertise of Peace Corps volunteer leaders whose service ended on March 15, 2020, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Undertaking National
3 Initiatives to Tackle Epidemic Act of 2020” or the
4 “UNITE Act of 2020”.

5 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

6 Congress makes the following findings:

7 (1) The outbreak of the novel coronavirus,
8 SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID–19 (referred to
9 in this Act as the “coronavirus”), has disrupted the
10 lives of all individuals in the United States and re-
11 quired enormous sacrifice. In following the guidance
12 of public health officials, individuals in the United
13 States have and can continue to play a key role in
14 defeating their common, invisible enemy.

15 (2) The Corporation for National and Commu-
16 nity Service (referred to in this Act as “CNCS”),
17 through the health, disaster, and poverty services
18 administered by the CNCS under the 3 flagship
19 AmeriCorps programs (AmeriCorps VISTA,
20 AmeriCorps NCCC, and AmeriCorps State and Na-
21 tional Volunteers), is uniquely positioned to aid
22 frontline workers and communities most impacted by
23 the coronavirus public health emergency if the Presi-
24 dent of the United States fully mobilizes those 3
25 programs.

1 (3) The Federal Emergency Management Agen-
2 cy (referred to in this section as “FEMA”), tasked
3 with leading aspects of the whole-of-government re-
4 sponse to the coronavirus outbreak, is reportedly
5 understaffed of those frontline workers that are es-
6 sential to responding to the public health emergency.

7 (4) On March 15, 2020, the Peace Corps invol-
8 untarily ended the service of approximately 7,300
9 volunteers. Many of them acquired public health
10 skills in countries abroad, which may also be applied
11 to further service in AmeriCorps, service in FEMA,
12 or continuing service in the Peace Corps once oper-
13 ations of the Peace Corps are to resume.

14 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.**

15 It is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

16 (1) the President should fully utilize the com-
17 petencies of the Federal Government workforce to
18 battle the outbreak of coronavirus, the worst global
19 health emergency the United States has faced in a
20 century, as well as make available expanded opportu-
21 nities for individuals in the United States desiring to
22 serve their country in its time of need;

23 (2) the President should elevate the role of
24 CNCS within the whole-of-government response to

1 the coronavirus outbreak, including by urging its
2 Chief Executive Officer to—

3 (A) in cooperation with the White House
4 Coronavirus Task Force, take steps to actively
5 encourage volunteerism and specifically encour-
6 age individuals in the United States to serve as
7 a volunteer in an AmeriCorps program; and

8 (B) prioritize AmeriCorps grants that pro-
9 vide assistance to those most impacted by the
10 coronavirus public health emergency and recruit
11 the maximum number of volunteers authorized
12 by law, particularly focusing on the recently un-
13 employed;

14 (3) the United States should expand the Cadre
15 of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees (CORE)
16 program, administered by the Federal Emergency
17 Management Agency, to enlist individuals in the
18 United States to solve public health and supply-man-
19 agement challenges related to the coronavirus out-
20 break, as well as related to wildfires, hurricanes, and
21 other disasters; and

22 (4) bolstering the number full-time positions at
23 the Federal Emergency Management Agency will
24 also expand national service opportunities for quali-
25 fied individuals in the United States who have be-

1 come unemployed or underemployed as a result of
2 the coronavirus outbreak, including the approxi-
3 mately 7,300 Peace Corps volunteers whose service
4 ended on March 15, 2020.

5 **SEC. 4. MOBILIZING PROGRAMS IN THE CORONAVIRUS**
6 **PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY.**

7 (a) **PRIORITIZING CERTAIN AGREEMENTS.—**

8 (1) **IN GENERAL.**—Notwithstanding any provi-
9 sion of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973
10 (42 U.S.C. 4950 et seq.) or the National and Com-
11 munity Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12501 et
12 seq.), the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS shall, for
13 the period described in paragraph (2), prioritize ex-
14 isting agreements, or enter into new agreements,
15 with public and private nonprofit organizations, in
16 consultation with the Secretary of Health and
17 Human Services, the Director of the Centers for
18 Disease Control and Prevention, the Administrator
19 of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and
20 State governments, that will direct volunteers in pro-
21 grams administered by CNCS to assignments that
22 assist those individuals most impacted by the
23 coronavirus public health emergency, including as-
24 signments—

1 (A) providing support services to veterans,
2 homeless populations, the elderly, and other in-
3 dividuals who may be most vulnerable during
4 the coronavirus public health emergency;

5 (B) supporting health care professionals
6 and related positions;

7 (C) offering before- and after-school tutor-
8 ing and instruction for children in low-income
9 areas, including through remote learning;

10 (D) enabling children to access remote
11 learning by performing technology consults for
12 their families remotely and at home; and

13 (E) performing other functions consistent
14 with addressing the coronavirus public health
15 emergency.

16 (2) PERIOD.—The period described in this
17 paragraph—

18 (A) shall begin on the date of enactment of
19 this Act; and

20 (B) shall end—

21 (i) not earlier than the date of the
22 conclusion of the coronavirus public health
23 emergency; and

24 (ii) not later than 2 years after the
25 conclusion of such emergency.

1 (b) AUTHORIZATION FOR ADDITIONAL RECRUIT-
2 MENT OF AMERICORPS VOLUNTEERS.—

3 (1) IN GENERAL.—

4 (A) INCREASE IN NUMBER OF POSI-
5 TIONS.—Section 121(f)(1)(B) of the National
6 and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C.
7 12571(f)(1)(B)) is amended—

8 (i) in clause (vi), by striking “and” at
9 the end;

10 (ii) in clause (vii), by adding “and” at
11 the end; and

12 (iii) by adding at the end the fol-
13 lowing:

14 “(viii) 500,000 for each of fiscal years
15 2020 through 2022;”.

16 (B) REAUTHORIZATIONS.—

17 (i) AMERICORPS VISTA.—Section
18 501(a)(1) of the Domestic Volunteer Serv-
19 ice Act of 1973 (42 U.S.C. 5081(a)(1)) is
20 amended by striking “\$100,000,000 for
21 fiscal year 2010 and such sums as may be
22 necessary for each of the fiscal years 2011
23 through 2014” and inserting “such sums
24 as may be necessary for each of fiscal
25 years 2020 through 2022”.

1 (ii) AMERICORPS NCCC.—Section
 2 501(a)(1) of the National and Community
 3 Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C.
 4 12681(a)(1)) is amended—

5 (I) by striking clauses (i) and
 6 (ii); and

7 (II) by striking “title I—” and
 8 inserting “title I, such sums as may
 9 be necessary for each of fiscal years
 10 2020 through 2022.”.

11 (iii) AMERICORPS STATE AND NA-
 12 TIONAL VOLUNTEERS.—Section 501(a)(2)
 13 of the National and Community Service
 14 Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12681(a)(2)) is
 15 amended by striking “2010 through 2014”
 16 and inserting “2020 through 2022”.

17 (2) REQUIREMENT.—To fulfill the purposes of
 18 subsection (a), the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS
 19 shall expedite the recruitment and selection of volun-
 20 teers who are—

21 (A) unemployed veterans;

22 (B) individuals who become unemployed or
 23 underemployed as a result of the coronavirus
 24 public health emergency; and

1 (C) AmeriCorps members, or Peace Corps
2 volunteers, who have had their service ended as
3 a result of such emergency.

4 (c) BRIEFING TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 30
5 days after the date of enactment of this Act, and every
6 180 days thereafter, the Chief Executive Officer of CNCS
7 shall submit a report, to the Committee on Health, Edu-
8 cation, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the Com-
9 mittee on Education and Labor of the House of Rep-
10 resentatives, on the operating plan of the CNCS to carry
11 out subsections (a) and (b), including the amendments
12 under subsection (b).

13 (d) ENHANCED STIPEND.—Section 105(b)(2)(A) of
14 the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (42 U.S.C.
15 4955(b)(2)(A)) is amended to read as follows:

16 “(A) beginning for fiscal year 2020, the min-
17 imum allowance is not less than an amount equal to
18 not less than 200 percent of the income official pov-
19 erty line (as defined by the Office of Management
20 and Budget, and revised annually in accordance with
21 section 673(2) of the Community Services Block
22 Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2))) applicable to a fam-
23 ily of 1; and”.

24 (e) CORONAVIRUS PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY DE-
25 FINED.—In this section, the term “coronavirus public

1 health emergency” means the public health emergency de-
 2 clared by the Secretary of Health and Human Services
 3 under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42
 4 U.S.C. 247d) on January 31, 2020, with respect to
 5 COVID–19.

6 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION FOR SURGE CAPACITY FOR FED-**
 7 **ERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of the Federal
 9 Emergency Management Agency shall appoint, admin-
 10 ister, and expedite the training of an additional 10,000
 11 Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees, under
 12 the Response and Recover Directorate (referred to in this
 13 section as “CORE employees”) under the Office of Re-
 14 sponse and Recovery, above the level of such employees
 15 in fiscal year 2019, to address the coronavirus public
 16 health emergency.

17 (b) DETAIL OF CORE EMPLOYEES.—A CORE em-
 18 ployee may be detailed, through mutual agreement, to any
 19 Federal agency that is a participating agency in the White
 20 House Coronavirus Task Force, to fulfill an assignment
 21 for the Task Force, including—

- 22 (1) logistical support for the supply chain of
- 23 medical equipment;
- 24 (2) tracing contacts of infected individuals and
- 25 their status while being quarantined;

1 (3) providing nutritional assistance to vulner-
2 able populations; and

3 (4) administrative duties such as staffing call
4 centers to disseminate public-health related informa-
5 tion to the public.

6 (c) REQUIREMENT.—As soon as feasible, the Admin-
7 istrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency
8 shall make public job announcements to fill the CORE em-
9 ployee positions authorized under subsection (a), which
10 shall prioritize hiring from among the following groups of
11 individuals:

12 (1) Unemployed veterans of the Armed Forces.

13 (2) Individuals who have become unemployed or
14 underemployed as a result of the coronavirus public
15 health emergency.

16 (3) AmeriCorps members, or Peace Corps Vol-
17 unteers, who have had their service ended as a result
18 of the coronavirus public health emergency.

19 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
20 are authorized to be appropriated to the Administrator of
21 the Federal Emergency Management Agency such sums
22 as are necessary for each of fiscal years 2020, 2021, and
23 2022 to carry out this section.

24 (e) CORONAVIRUS PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY DE-
25 FINED.—In this section, the term “coronavirus public

1 health emergency” has the meaning given the term in sec-
2 tion 4(e).

3 **SEC. 6. PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER REENROLLMENT ELIGI-**
4 **BILITY AND TRANSITION ASSISTANCE.**

5 (a) ASSISTANCE FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS
6 WHOSE SERVICE ENDED INVOLUNTARILY.—Notwith-
7 standing section 5 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C.
8 2504), with respect to all of the Peace Corps volunteers
9 whose service ended involuntarily on March 15, 2020 (or
10 earlier, in the case of volunteers who were serving China
11 and Mongolia), when the Director of the Peace Corps sus-
12 pended all volunteer operations due to the coronavirus
13 public health emergency, the Director of the Peace Corps
14 shall—

15 (1) continue to provide the health care de-
16 scribed in section 5(e) of such Act to the volunteer
17 during the 6-month period beginning on March 15,
18 2020, to supplement the benefits to which the volun-
19 teer is otherwise entitled under section 5 of such
20 Act;

21 (2) waive all nonmedical application require-
22 ments for the reenrollment of the volunteer during
23 the 1-year period beginning on March 15, 2020;

24 (3) expedite the medical clearance for such vol-
25 unteer to facilitate reenrollment;

1 (4) permit the volunteer, to the extent possible,
2 to resume the activity in which the volunteer had
3 been serving at the time of his or her involuntarily
4 end of service or any other activity, by mutual agree-
5 ment; and

6 (5) provide the volunteer, beginning on the date
7 of reenrollment, with the compensation, allowances,
8 benefits, and other terms and conditions of service
9 to which the volunteer is entitled under such Act.

10 (b) REPORT ON RESTART OF PEACE CORPS OPER-
11 ATIONS FOLLOWING END OF PUBLIC HEALTH EMER-
12 GENCY.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the en-
13 actment of this Act, the Director of the Peace Corps shall
14 submit a report to the Committee on Foreign Relations
15 of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of
16 the House of Representatives that describes the efforts of
17 the Peace Corps—

18 (1) to offer reenrollment to each Peace Corps
19 volunteer whose service ended involuntarily on
20 March 15, 2020 (or earlier, in the case of volunteers
21 who were serving China and Mongolia), due to the
22 coronavirus public health emergency;

23 (2) to obtain approval from countries, as nec-
24 essary, to return reenrolled volunteers to their pre-
25 vious assignments; and

1 (3) to identify the anticipated additional appro-
2 priations or new statutory authorities that would be
3 necessary to achieve the goal of safely redeploying
4 7,300 Peace Corps volunteers during the 1-year pe-
5 riod beginning on the date on which Peace Corps op-
6 erations resume.

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