



Eliminating AmeriCorps would be a huge loss

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It is a great disappointment that Congress is considering complete elimination of the AmeriCorps program. During my tenure at Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake, our AmeriCorps members have been invaluable. In my eight years as CEO, I have seen approximately 60 men and women who have spent one or two years with one mission in mind — giving back to communities in need. These struggling areas in the Baltimore and Anne Arundel region need their help and AmeriCorps members learn valuable lessons from working in these communities.

Indeed, AmeriCorps alumni have become community activists, lawyers, doctors and other professionals who continue to advocate for those less fortunate. Their sense of wanting to give back and volunteering is imbued with them forever.

Over the years, the service of these AmeriCorps members has resulted in tremendous growth of our organization. The return on this investment is priceless. Without AmeriCorps support, our ability to develop new programs and initiatives would be greatly reduced. Two thirds of our consistent, skilled construction supervision and labor would disappear.

I understand we are enduring difficult financial times and there are many wasteful programs that need to be cut. But AmeriCorps is not one of them. It is not a drain on the economy but instead gives back more substantive and tangible benefits to our cultural fabric.

We ask the U.S. Senate to reverse the U.S. House of Representatives decision to abolish this program.

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<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/readersrespond/bs-ed-amicorps-20110312,0,2827417.story>