



Duckworth introduces bill to expand national service opportunities for young Americans

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) introduced legislation today to help make sure every young American who wants to dedicate a year to national service has the opportunity to do so. The *21st Century American Service Act* would increase the number of service positions available through civilian national service organizations, educate all young Americans about the national service opportunities available to them and reduce financial barriers that prohibit some young Americans from serving.

“Expanding national service opportunities like Americorps is vital to the strength of our nation,” said Duckworth. “Just as picking up a rifle to defend our country is 'American Service,' so is delivering water filters to communities afflicted by lead-contaminated water, picking up a stick of chalk to reach low-income children or a hammer to rebuild homes for those devastated by natural disasters. I’m proud to be working with Senators Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Klobuchar and Baldwin to make sure every young American has an opportunity to give back to serve their country.

“When young Americans choose to spend a year of their life working at a service organization, there should be a path available for them to do it, no matter their background. Congress should expand opportunities for all young people to learn about these programs and reduce the financial barriers that too often get in the way when young people want to participate in them,” said Senator Gillibrand. “I am proud to introduce the *21st Century American Service Act* and I will continue to do everything I can to create pathways for young New Yorkers to serve their nation and help those in need.”

“Participating in service helps reinforce the value of community and fosters important skills that benefit young volunteers for the rest of their lives,” said Senator Blumenthal. “Since their inception, AmeriCorps and other national service organizations have helped Americans give back more than 1.4 billion hours of service to our nation. This bill will help these vital national service organizations support more service opportunities and remove the financial barriers that prevent many young people from taking advantage of them.

“National service provides people with the opportunity to make a positive difference and Wisconsinites are committed to serving their communities now more than ever,” said Senator Baldwin. “This legislation will enhance national service opportunities for those who have answered the call to service and help organizations expand their impact and engage our citizens and communities.”

Many national service programs such as City Year and Teach for America are extremely selective, accepting just a fraction of applications and with acceptance rates comparable to some Ivy League universities. *The 21st Century American Service Act* would make it possible for all Americans to have the chance to serve in some fashion, utilizing the energy of any and all young Americans willing to give back to their country. The legislation would reduce financial barriers that prevent people from doing a year of service by raising the living stipend for national service program participants and excluding it from being taxed as gross income, increasing the national service education award and excluding the Americorps education benefit from being taxed as gross income.

Duckworth announced her plans to introduce the *21st Century American Service Act* after [volunteering](#) at the Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center Food Pantry in Chicago, IL, this past September 11th. In advance of Thanksgiving, Duckworth also [wrote](#) about the value of giving back through service. Congressman Seth Moulton (MA-06) is sponsoring companion legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Throughout her personal and professional life, Duckworth has also been a strong advocate for the expansion of national service opportunities for all Americans. Duckworth served in the Reserve Forces for 23 years and continued to serve her fellow Veterans as Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs and then as Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. She has also made a point of volunteering with community partners at local schools, food pantries and community centers.

Voices for National Service, a diverse coalition of national and local service programs, state service commissions and individual champions, supports Senator Duckworth's effort to expand the number of national service opportunities available to all Americans and to increase the earned benefits for AmeriCorps members who dedicate a year to serving their community and the nation.