



Durbin Introduces Bill For Civilian Conservation Corps

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WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) announced the introduction of the *RENEW Conservation Corps Act*, a bill that would create a civilian conservation corps that provides valuable job training and work experience to Americans while also completing needed maintenance and restoration of parks, trails, and natural areas. Modeled after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Civilian Conservation Corps – which employed, educated, and trained three million young men during the Great Depression – Durbin’s bill would create a new conservation corps run through the U.S. Departments of Interior and Agriculture and authorize more than \$55 billion over a five-year period to put one million Americans to work to address the backlog of deferred conservation projects.

“America’s outdoor spaces have provided recreation for generations, and this year we’ve seen how important and valuable they’ve been to countless Americans looking for a respite. If we are to leave these natural gifts to the next generation, we have to take responsibility in protecting them,” Durbin said. “This bill is a straightforward approach to creating one million jobs that can address maintenance and restoration of our greatest natural resources and recreation areas. This is an investment to protect the beauty of America’s natural treasures.”

“Access to public and natural spaces is an essential part of our individual and collective health and well-being,” said Jerry Adelman, President and CEO of Openlands, a conservation organization active in the Chicago region. “With the RENEW Conservation Corps Act, we will welcome a new generation of jobs that restore and preserve our natural lands and waters, and create more inclusive and inviting places for all to enjoy and connect with nature.”

The bill provides anyone 16 years or older at least two weeks of training for positions lasting a minimum of twelve weeks, but no longer than one year. All participants will receive at least \$15 an hour, with some wages determined based on work performed. In

addition, those participating in the program that complete a full year of work would be eligible to receive up to \$5,500 credit for post-secondary education. To ensure a diverse workforce, the bill requires participants be reflective of the demographics in the area where the project is being completed.

The bill would help fund and complete various projects, including: Tree planting; restoration and management of wildlife habitat; invasive species control; prescribed burns; restoration of streams wetlands, and other aquatic ecosystems; monitor water quality in streams and lakes; conduct fish and wildlife surveys; construct trails, bridges, campgrounds, picnic shelters or other recreation amenities; maintenance and construction of park playgrounds, restoration of brownfield sites; creating rain gardens; creating pollinator gardens; construct green schoolyards; upkeep/creation of urban gardens and farms; plant native grasslands; and any other projects determined by the Interior and Agriculture Department secretaries.