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**Summary included

KENNEDY, COLLEAGUES RENEW CALL FOR NATIONAL SERVICE:

"SERVE AMERICA ACT" WILL INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

FOR AMERICANS OF ALL AGES

New York City, NY – Today, Senators Edward M. Kennedy, Orrin Hatch, Barack Obama, John McCain, Chris Dodd, Thad Cochran and Hillary Rodham Clinton introduced new legislation, the "Serve America Act," to expand opportunities for service for all Americans. The legislation will ask 175,000 more Americans to give a year of service to address specific national challenges, thereby expanding the number of national service participants to 250,000. The legislation will

also increase opportunities for individuals to serve at every stage of their life and will support nonprofit organizations and social entrepreneurs with innovative solutions to our most pressing problems.

"Time and again we've learned that large numbers of Americans are ready, willing, able, and even eager to be involved in service, and that all we have to do is ask them to do so. The Serve America Act will ask. It will connect every generation through service, and enable them to help tackle a wide range of national challenges, from the dropout crisis that plagues our schools to the lack of health care in our neediest communities to the energy and environmental crises that threaten our planet," said Senator Kennedy, Chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, which oversees existing national and community service programs. "Many Americans are already answering the call to such service, by weatherizing homes, mentoring students, or working to bring clean water and life-saving vaccines to peoples in many lands. This legislation will dramatically expand opportunities for Americans willing to devote a year or more to address such challenges. It will draw on the talents and skills of every age group, such as by expanding opportunities for young people to improve their communities, and enabling retiring 'baby boomers' to transition to second careers in public service."

Senator Hatch said, "Volunteer service is the lifeblood of our republic. It brings out the best in people and strengthens our communities. Throughout history, Americans have stepped forward and volunteered to meet every challenge. Within each of us is a desire to help and serve our neighbors the world over; and yet, the hectic lifestyle we all live often crowds out our natural ability to give service. That is why my longtime friend, Senator Kennedy, and I are introducing the Serve America Act. This historic legislation will inspire and provide opportunities for civic-minded Americans to raise the bar of service and fulfill the destiny of the immortal words of 'America the Beautiful,' to 'more than self their country love. And mercy more than life!'"

"America faces more challenges today than ever before. And new challenges require a new level of commitment. By harnessing the talents and efforts of the American people, faith-based groups and nonprofit organizations, we can empower more people, improve more communities and tackle more of our nation's greatest challenges. That is precisely the intent of this bill, and I'm pleased to be working alongside Senator Kennedy to champion this important legislation."

"Every American can give back to their communities and help their fellow citizens through service," said Senator Obama. "Many Americans serve their nation through military service. Others serve by volunteering in schools, shelters, churches, hospitals, and disaster relief efforts. Still more are firefighters, teachers, or police officers. As a young man, I served as a community organizer on the South Side of Chicago, where I learned ways to create opportunities for other

people to achieve their dreams. Our nation faces serious challenges in its neighborhoods and schools, and we must empower Americans with the resources they need to give back and improve their communities. I am proud to support this legislation and I commend Chairman Kennedy for his continued leadership in opening doors for public service opportunities."

Senator McCain said, "I believe we must inspire Americans to serve a cause greater than their own self interest. The benefits of investing your time and your effort in a worthy cause are beyond measure. That is why I am pleased to join my colleagues in introducing legislation that will significantly increase the opportunities for Americans to engage in community and national public service."

"We are always at our best as a nation when Americans are united in a common cause, vested in each other and our country," said Dodd, a returned Peace Corps volunteer and a longtime advocate for national service. "We know that the 21st Century holds new tests and unprecedented challenges for America, but we also know that when called upon, every generation of Americans has risen to face whatever challenges lay before them, beating great odds to pass on a stronger and safer world to their children. By harnessing the skills of Americans of all ages and by inspiring them to use their skills to give back to their country through national service, I am confident that America will once again be able to meet any challenge set before us."

Senator Cochran said, "More than three years after Hurricane Katrina destroyed the Mississippi Gulf Coast, students and adults from across our country continue to come to our state to serve in the rebuilding effort. These people have lifted the spirits of the Mississippians they have served, but I believe this type of service can change the lives of those who serve as well. I am proud to sponsor this legislation, which will encourage young people and adults alike to contribute to a cause greater than themselves, and in the process change both their lives the lives of those they serve."

"In the face of disaster and need, Americans across the country have shown they are ready and willing to serve, but we need to ask and encourage more people to make service a part of their lives. By giving more Americans the opportunity to get involved and work together, we can help meet so many of our challenges," said Senator Clinton.

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THE SERVE AMERICA ACT

A Legislative Initiative to Expand and Improve Domestic and International Service Opportunities for All Americans Senator Edward M. Kennedy and Senator Orrin Hatch

Themes

- Expand opportunities for people to serve at every stage of life.
- Use service to meet specific national challenges. Put service to work to solve our most pressing challenges, such as tackling the dropout crisis and strengthening our schools; improving energy efficiency; safeguarding the environment; improving health care in low-income communities; expanding economic opportunities for low-income individuals; and preparing for and responding to disasters and emergencies.

I. Ask Many More Americans to Give a Year to Solve Specific Challenges: Building on the success of AmeriCorps, the legislation will create new, effective "Corps" focused on areas of national need. It will ask 175,000 Americans to give a year of service through these corps as part of a new national commitment to solve these challenges, expanding the number of national service participants to 250,000.

II. Increase Opportunities to Serve by People of All Ages:

- **For Students, Increase Service Early in Life:** Service early in life will put more and more youth on a path to a lifetime of service. The legislation will improve opportunities for young people in low income, high-need communities to engage in service to improve their own communities.
- **For Working Adults, Encourage Employers to Let Employees Serve,** by establishing a tax incentive for employers who allow employees to take paid leave for full-time service.
- **For Retirees, Value Their Skills and Make Service Work for Them.** Many retiring citizens are ready, willing, and able to be involved in service and have skills the public needs – but none of the current service programs are structured with their needs in mind. The legislation will enhance incentives for retirees to give a year of service through the Corps, and will establish "Encore Fellowships" to help retirees who wish to transition to longer-term public service.

- **For Americans of All Ages, Increase Volunteering.** Not all Americans can make a significant time commitment to service, but many volunteer in other ways. The legislation will expand the volunteer pool by establishing a "Volunteer Generation Fund" to help nonprofit organizations recruit and manage more volunteers.

III. Support Innovation in the Nonprofit Sector: Social entrepreneurs who have launched innovative nonprofit organizations such as Teach for America and Citizen Schools in Boston are experimenting with new solutions to pressing problems. The legislation will recognize and support the role of effective social entrepreneurs in solving our national challenges:

- **Establish a Commission** to study and improve how the federal government, nonprofits, and the private sector work together to meet national challenges effectively.
- **Apply Effective Business Strategies to the Nonprofit Sector,** by establishing a network of "Community Solution Funds" that are basically venture capital funds to help the nonprofit sector seek talent and put it to work.

IV. Improve and Expand International Service and America's Respect in the World

- **Support for Short-Term International Service Opportunities:** We must expand the Peace Corps so more Americans can provide critical assistance to people across the globe while promoting America's international standing. But many skilled Americans are unable to give two years. The legislation will strengthen the current "Volunteers for Prosperity" program, which coordinates and supports short-term international service opportunities for skilled professionals to serve in developing nations.