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****Summary of legislation included**

**STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY ON THE NEXT GENERATION
OF NATIONAL SERVICE**

Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Hearing

As Entered into the Record

Many years ago, on the fifth anniversary of the Peace Corps, I asked one of those young Americans why they had volunteered, and I will never forget the answer: "It was the first time someone asked me to do something for my country."

Now it's time to ask again. Americans young and old are looking for new ways to serve their communities and give back to their country. This hearing will enable us to learn of new and better ways to provide those opportunities to serve.

Service has always been a bipartisan goal, and the legislation we'll hear about today continues that tradition. From President Kennedy's creation of the Peace Corps to President George H.W. Bush's Points of Light to President Clinton's AmeriCorps, presidents of both parties have contributed their own ideas about how best to ask the American people to serve their own communities. I commend President Obama for making it an early priority of his Administration to expand service opportunities across the country to involve many more Americans in meeting our most pressing challenges.

In 1990, working with the first President Bush, our Committee approved the original National and Community Service Act. Many of those who worked on that legislation are - leading the way again today. Senator Hatch has committed so much of his life to the causes he believes in. Senator Mikulski planted the seed for AmeriCorps and has never stopped fighting.

I'm proud to work with both of them again on the bipartisan Serve America Act. And I commend Senator Enzi for his support as we guide this bill and the reauthorizations of the National and Community Service Act and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act through our Committee. As always, he's an excellent partner.

The Serve America Act draws on some of the lessons of the past two decades of service programs—

- Service can make a greater difference in tackling problems if we focus on specific challenges;
- Service opportunities early in life can put young people on a path to a lifetime of service;
- More and more older Americans are interested in putting their skills and experience to work for their communities; and

- Forward-thinking social entrepreneurs are coming up with their own effective ways of tackling some of our greatest challenges.

Now is the time to act on what we've learned. The Serve America Act will create new volunteer corps with specific missions. For example, as the major national debate about climate change goes on, a Clean Energy Service Corps will take steps to conserve our resources. As the dropout crisis continues to plague so many of low-income schools, an Education Corps will tutor, teach, and mentor students.

The legislation will also increase service opportunities for senior citizens, to draw on the many skills that older Americans have to offer. It will support part-time volunteering through a Volunteer Generation Fund to increase volunteer management and capacity. It will also increase the Eli Segal Education Award, the value of which has remained stagnant while college costs have skyrocketed.

National service has been a cause of mine for many years, and the time is right today to do much more. I look forward to working closely with my colleagues on the Committee and the President to strengthen service opportunities for all Americans.

A summary of the legislation is below.

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 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, as evidenced by those who already serve through the current Senior Corps Programs. The legislation will build upon the existing framework and enhance incentives for retirees to give a year of service through the new

Corps, and will establish “Encore Fellowships” that help retirees 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.

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