March 18, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boehner
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Reid, Senator McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Representative Boehner:

We write in support of reauthorizing and expanding AmeriCorps and other national service and volunteer programs that the Corporation for National and Community Service administers. Accordingly, we support the passage of the House Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education (GIVE) Act and the Senate Serve America Act. In this difficult time for our country, service remains an enduring American value that brings communities together and reminds us of the strength of our common bond.

As Governors, we witness firsthand the positive effects that national service and volunteerism have in communities throughout our states. Through outstanding state-federal partnerships, we have a unique opportunity to support service and volunteering through Corporation for National and Community Service programs. Additionally, Governor-appointed state commissions oversee and administer AmeriCorps, promote national service and volunteering, and develop innovative volunteer opportunities to meet the needs of our communities and our states.

As Governors, we recognize the value of national and community service as a tool in meeting important needs and addressing pressing challenges, and we request the following provisions in the final reauthorization legislation:

- Increase administrative funding to enhance the capacity of state commissions' infrastructure. The proposed legislation will dramatically increase the programming commissions oversee, and additional administrative funding is critical in ensuring appropriate oversight and thoughtful program expansion.
- Streamline the AmeriCorps funding allocation, and at the same time, allow Governors and state commissions to set priorities and indicators. Current legislation revises the program funding allocation model to ensure more effective distribution of funds and coordination at the local level. This revised model will assist our efforts to target national service resources to the most pressing needs of our communities.
- Fully implement fixed amount grants to reduce the burden on programs. This provision will allow AmeriCorps to become more accessible to smaller organizations, especially small faith-based programs and those in rural parts of the country. Fixed amount grants will also focus resources on program development, delivery and quality, all while maintaining grantee accountability.

We strongly embrace the effort of both President Obama and a bi-partisan group of Congressional leaders to improve and expand national and community service opportunities. We support the effort to enhance the capacity of state service commissions and ensure that national service is

mission-oriented, efficient, and effective. We therefore respectively request your support for the reauthorization and expansion of these vital national service programs.

Sincerely,

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
California

Governor David A. Paterson
New York

Governor Mike Beebe
Arkansas

Governor M. Jodi Rell
Connecticut

Governor Chester J. Culver
Iowa

Governor Steven L. Beshear
Kentucky

Governor John E. Baldacci
Maine

Governor Martin O'Malley
Maryland

Governor Deval Patrick
Massachusetts

Governor Jennifer M. Granholm
Michigan

Governor Bill Richardson
New Mexico

Governor Christine O. Gregoire
Washington

Governor Joe Manchin III
West Virginia