



NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MILITARY, NATIONAL, AND PUBLIC SERVICE

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subject: Discussion with Colorado Service Leaders
April 19, 2018

The following is a record of a meeting between the Commission and the participants listed below, which took place on April 19, 2018, from 8:00-9:00am MT at the Colorado Governor's Mansion Carriage House in Denver, CO. Chairman Joe Heck moderated the conversation. All Commissioners with the exception of Mr. Gearan and Ms. Haines were present for this conversation, and several members of the Commission staff observed the meeting. Please note that the following is not a verbatim transcript of the discussion.

Representatives of the Colorado service community:

- Donna Lynne, Lieutenant Governor and Chief Operating Officer, State of Colorado
- Mickey Hunt, Deputy Executive Director, Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Colonel Scott Sherman, Chief of the Joint Staff, Colorado National Guard
- Fred Jarman, Garfield Deputy County Manager and former Serve Colorado Commissioner
- Ernest House, Executive Director, Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs
- Ken Goodson, AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps, Southwest Region Director
- Dan Dunlap, State Program Director, Corporation for National and Community Service
- Antonio Mendez, Executive Director, Serve Colorado, The Governor's Commission on Community Service
- Patrick Meyers, Chief of Staff to Governor Hickenlooper

Key Takeaways:

The discussion included the following topics of interest:

- Colorado experiences some challenges as it relates to the urban-rural divide, with the needs of rural communities being very different than those in the urban areas. Specific initiatives related to rural areas that should be explored include Rural Philanthropy Days and Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE).
- Tribal communities in Colorado (and elsewhere) prioritize long-standing relationships with organizations that are willing to understand their culture and specific needs, not quick-fix solutions.

Meeting Discussion:

Lt. Gov. Lynne introduced the Commission to the Governor's Commission on Community Service, known as Serve Colorado, which is located within the Lieutenant Governor's office. She explained that Serve Colorado works with AmeriCorps and other programs and has now expanded its programs across the state. Serve Colorado works with young people to foster a culture of service. An important part of what Serve Colorado does is engage communities across the State on education and early childhood issues. The Colorado legislature has already appropriated funds to continue Serve Colorado's work into 2019, when Colorado will have a new executive administration.

Lt. Gov. Lynne also discussed the responsibilities of her office. In Colorado, the Lieutenant Governor serves as the State's Chief Operating Officer responsible for managing the 31,000 State employees. She works closely with Patrick Meyers, the Governor's Chief of Staff, to carry out these responsibilities.

Chairman Heck provided an overview of the Commission and its mission. He explained that the Commission grew out of a focused idea that through the leadership of Sens. McCain and Reed developed into a more holistic effort to examine service. He explained that the Commission is on the second stop of a national listening tour.

Chairman Heck asked Lt. Gov. Lynne about how Colorado has been successful in getting its service programs up and running and what challenges the State faced or continues to face regarding outreach and getting people involved. Lt. Gov. Lynne started by emphasizing the importance of having a leader passionate about service, noting that Governor Hickenoper embraces service. She said the State has a Governor's Fellows Program that brings people from the private sector into government service, to educate them about public service and working with the government. The State of Colorado also has a program that allows employees to serve for a day, and a lot of Colorado business do this as well. The State also collaborates with many non-profits.

Mr. Mendez explained that the Serve Colorado program is run as part of AmeriCorps State and National. Serve Colorado has a board of commissioners. Serve Colorado reports its state service plan to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) every three years. The most recent report identified some obstacles to service. He described the important role of geography in Colorado; while there are many service opportunities, Serve Colorado finds that there are not enough non-profits sufficiently large both to apply for and to keep up with the onerous process of monitoring grants from AmeriCorps. This is particularly the case in more rural areas. Serve Colorado has developed a model to work with intermediaries to reach the smaller, largely rural non-profits, which are then responsible for the match dollars. Serve Colorado currently works in 36 counties across the State and plans to develop its programs to 50 counties in the next three years.

Lt. Gov. Lynne addressed Colorado's robust non-profit community. She discussed an initiative called Rural Philanthropy Days that has helped to reach rural populations that lack infrastructure to support young people. The Days occur two times each year. Denver-based philanthropic

organizations go into small communities and do a form of “speed dating” that gives small non-profits the opportunity to meet with organizations that have more funding and can also assist in providing technical assistance (ie, grant writing). Mr. Mendez noted that Serve Colorado participates in the Days.

Chairman Heck asked about engaging with Native American populations. **Mr. House** explained that there are 567 federally recognized tribes across the United States, each a sovereign nation. The Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs works collaboratively with Serve Colorado and CNCS. There are two main tribes in Colorado (the Southern Ute tribe and the Ute Mountain Ute tribe); they struggle with the urban/rural divide, but thrive with the right kind of support and collaboration. He described a program that involved one tribe partnering with a Boys and Girls Club through AmeriCorps VISTA; this was one of the first to integrate tribal culture—such as language and history—into a Boys and Girls Club effort. The tribe has also worked with the Southwest Conservation Corps. A different tribe worked with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the State Housing Initiative to develop a housing project for veterans—the first time this had been done—with support from an AmeriCorps program. Mr. House said that communication across Indian country, which is largely rural, remains a struggle because broadband has not hit the more remote, rural areas where the reservations are located.

Chairman Heck asked what Colorado is doing to increase propensity to serve in the military, noting that today, approximately 26-27% of youth are eligible for military service and only a portion of that population is propensed. **Col. Sherman** discussed what he described as an extensive recruiting effort for Army and Air National Guard. The National Guard (NG) has recruiters across the state, including in rural communities. He said the percentage of eligible youth in Colorado is far lower than the national average at about 7-8%. The NG and the services compete for the same population. The NG’s recruiting efforts are assisted by members of the NG recruiting people in their own communities. The NG has a presence at big events across the State, with over 20 recruiting units. Currently, the Army NG is over 100% filled and the Air NG is over 95% filled. The Colorado NG has 5,500 total members, 4,000 in the Army and 1,500 in the Air. It targets 550 new Army NG members each year; **Mr. Hunt** added that the Air NG targets 120-150 recruits each year.

Dr. Davidson inquired whether the 7-8% figure represented those qualified to serve or those qualified and propensed to serve, and asked further about the factors that disqualified individuals from service. **Col. Sherman** confirmed that 7-8% represents those qualified to serve, noting that the active components are struggling to recruit in Colorado. Common disqualifying factors include medical issues, drug convictions, and trouble with the law. *Chairman Heck* inquired about the impact of marijuana legalization in Colorado. **Col. Sherman** indicated that the legalization of marijuana in Colorado does not seem to have had an impact on NG recruiting, noting that the NG has not observed an increase in positive marijuana use among those in the NG, although he did not comment on marijuana usage as a disqualifying factor during the recruiting process. He noted that following a first positive test, the NG generally counsels the

individual and allows him or her to remain in the NG. Returning to convictions, Col. Sherman said a conviction even in youth is disqualifying for membership in the NG.

Chairman Heck asked how Colorado recruits people into the Civil Air Patrol. Mr. Hunt said the Civil Air Patrol currently has 1,600 members, mostly high school students. Many applicants to service academies have a background in the Civil Air Patrol. Colorado has one full-time employee who works Civil Air Patrols. A number of pilots and adults serve as mentors to the Civil Air Patrols in their communities.

Ms. James asked about concerns regarding cultural sensitivity among Native American communities with respect to State-sponsored programs. Mr. House said this has been an issue. He noted that tribes have been more supportive of programs have the flexibility and willingness to work with the community long term and not apply a cookie-cutter approach. He said the tribes are very much in need of infrastructure and want and need organizations that are prepared to be there for the long term – in contrast to short-term fixes. He noted that Native Americans serve in the U.S. military at the highest rate. He endorsed service programs as a way to help transform today’s youth, and cited in particular the opportunity presented by certain State health programs.

Chairman Heck asked about challenges for rural communities, addressing Mr. Jarman, who works for a community on the western slope. Mr. Jarman explained efforts to bring resources to rural communities in the west. He said the Rural Philanthropy Days initiative has been a powerful tool. He added that counties like his have hubs that serve to develop synergies and bring services to rural communities; examples of such hubs may include the Future Farmers of America at Colorado State University and local 4-H programs. Mr. Jarman believes service presents a viable opportunity for young people to stay in their communities. He is working through Serve Colorado to try to build a stronger foundation in those communities.

Mr. Allard asked about engaging youth in service. Mr. Mendez addressed what he described as a brand problem with AmeriCorps. He said it is hard for people to understand the different AmeriCorps programs. Youth are aware of specific programs, such as Teach For America and City Year, but not that they are AmeriCorps program. Mr. Mendez has been working with Mr. Goodson to make better use of media to highlight the different AmeriCorps programs. **Mr. Goodson** addressed the difficulties in attracting youth to AmeriCorps and the Peace Corps, noting that he spent 16 years with the Peace Corps. He addressed the financial implications of working in an AmeriCorps or Peace Corps program, noting that these opportunities do not lead directly to jobs and the education award is considered taxable income.

Mr. Goodson also addressed cultural impediments, including, for example, the Peace Corps’ difficulty in attracting a socioeconomically diverse applicant pool. Part of the difficulty is financial: not everyone can afford to serve for 27 months. For many people, serving in one of these programs may go against what their families—who may have worked hard to get out of difficult socioeconomic conditions—want them to do. Through Serve Colorado, Mr. Goodson, Mr. Mendez, and Mr. Dunlap have worked with interested youth to help them find the right track following their service period. Mr. Goodson thinks their efforts have been helped by an actively

involved Lieutenant Governor who encourages service opportunities that make the maximum possible impact. He noted that young people want to serve on compelling issues and in fields that will help with their expected career paths. Mr. Goodson thinks the Peace Corps decision to give participants a choice in their assignments has been beneficial because it enables the participants to engage in service that may lead them to where they want to go professionally.

Mr. Jarman provided the example of the Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) program at the University of Oregon. RARE is an AmeriCorps program that Mr. Jarman described as providing a bridge from service through the university system to professional development for its members. He urged the Commission to review the programs, which began in the mid-1990s and has had a positive impact on rural areas in Oregon.

Dr. Davidson noted that private employers have expressed to her that they want to see employment candidates who have service experience. She expressed surprise that people may view service as a diversion rather than an experiential learning program, even a resume builder. She asked if this perception had to do with marketing or other factors. **Mr. Dunlap** agreed and expressed that service presents not only a challenge of branding and awareness, but also of framing the reasons why one might want to serve. He noted that those individuals already propensed to give back are easy to recruit. The other individuals need to see what tangible benefits they will get from service and understand whether service will or will not take them off their career tracks. *Dr. Davidson* noted that people may be attracted for practical reasons—such as developing their career and burnishing their resume—and then inspired with the service they perform. **Mr. Dunlap** concurred, noting that a lot of members arrive thinking they will do one year of service and end up remaining in Colorado and pursuing a lifetime of service. **Mr. Goodson** noted that the older generation—parents—of the 18-24 year olds do not have the experience of seeing service as a career builder as much as the younger may, and the younger generation is filling out their application packet with the older generation looking over their shoulder.

Chairman Heck noted the importance of connecting with influencers as a way to have an impact on the younger generation. **Mr. Goodson** noted that AmeriCorps does very little to connect proactively with influencers, noting that AmeriCorps has no advertising budget. Its funds are appropriated to run current front-burner programs. Mr. Goodson echoed Mr. Mendez' suggestion that programs like AmeriCorps and the Peace Corps become more technologically savvy, noting that they currently struggle to be on the front lines of technology. **Lt. Gov. Lynne** cited Teach For America as a good example of program with a strong brand, noting that her son participated in the program. She described the program as providing decent wages and the promise of tuition for a substantial period of time following completing of the program. In contrast, she noted the Serve Colorado has no advertising budget and lacks a recognized brand. As college becomes more expensive, it becomes harder to convince parents to allow the children to participate in these programs.

Chairman Heck asked about programs and ideas for encouraging seniors to serve. He noted that seniors today are not retiring like they did in the past and want to stay engaged. **Mr. Mendez** said Serve Colorado has programs for individuals 55 and older, which are described in

an addendum to its latest CNCS plan. He also noted that the Colorado Governor's office now has an Advisor on Aging. Mr. Mendez noted that Serve Colorado also recently brought on a commissioner from a senior research center. Mr. Mendez is exploring composition of the commission, potentially to include commissioners focused on veterans and on the native population.

Mr. Kilgannon asked **Col. Sherman** to discuss further the Civil Air Patrol program. **Col. Sherman** said that the emphasis is on high school students but that young people can begin with Civil Air Patrol at an early age—he thought at about ten years. High school students can benefit from the educational part of Civil Air Patrol, including STEM projects. He noted that Civil Air Patrol students have won awards in nationwide cyber competitions in each of the last three years. Civil Air Patrols are also frequent at various community events as honor guards, and many young people are attracted to the aviation component of the Patrol.

Col. Sherman then addressed Colorado's work with veterans. The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs serves veterans statewide. In his opinion, collaborating with non-profits has been key to success. **Col. Sherman** described the opportunity for service in the veterans community as huge. The majority of veterans are not "in need" and even some of those in need are able to contribute. Veterans are typically in the 22-30 year old range, already have college benefits, and are looking more for a mission than for a salary. He sees an opportunity to develop service within this community, to show veterans what sort of things they can pursue to be leaders in their own communities. He said Colorado will be opening a Veterans One Source in Grand Junction next year, which will be a partnership with a non-profit. **Col. Sherman** praised the American Indian community as a big nationwide success story: though many veterans from Vietnam were not treated well in society at large upon returning to the United States, American Indians were considered heroes when they returned to their reservations. And since that time, American Indian military service has remained high. Their communities valued that service even if the war was not popular in society in general. *This led **Chairman Heck** to suggest a marketing line to connect veterans with service, "Heroes looking for their next mission."* **Mr. Khazei** noted that veterans want to serve and volunteer at higher rates than non-veterans, and praised the construction of a system that would link veterans with service.

Mr. Khazei inquired further about the background of volunteers in the VISTA program that worked with a Colorado tribe. **Mr. House** said the volunteers were a combination of Native Americans and others. He then talked more broadly about the relationship between the State and the tribes, which he described as good in Colorado though not as good in other states. Having a solid working relationship with the State has helped to encourage members of the tribes to become involved in serving their own communities. He emphasized the importance of locally-based service programs and the socio-economic context of the local communities. **Mr. Khazei** asked about replicating that program across the country with other tribes. **Mr. House** said he is working on collecting information and sharing their experience more broadly. In one example, he has created the first economic impact report for American Indian communities, the "[Colorado American Indian and Alaska Native Economic Impact Report](#)." This was in part an effort to break down barriers with state governments that may not see the value American Indian

communities are providing to their states. Mr. House said that they presented this to American Indian groups around the country. Among others, the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma followed their lead, generating their own economic impact report which showed that the Nation put \$5 million into the state. Mr. House said tribes are interested in getting involved in service and in working with local and state governments if approached in the right way.

Mr. Barney asked what Colorado can teach the rest of the country about public schools and their role in developing a culture of service. **Lt. Gov. Lynne** said the State government has a limited ability to influence public schools because of the extreme form of local control of education in Colorado. She noted that civics education is not required in Colorado, and there are very few mandates with respect to what must be taught in the State.