

Comments to the Initial Draft Report of the National Commission on  
Military, National, and Public Service

by

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I appreciated the comments offered by Chairman Dr. Joseph Heck at the Voices for National Service reception on February 12, 2019. His remarks prompted me to offer comments to the initial report offered by the Commission.

#### When We Serve

While the report has a young adult service focus, that orientation only applies to military service. I continually was amazed in my visits to AmeriCorps locations, that older individuals often said that they wish they could serve. In fact they can serve, as there are no upper age limits for those who want to serve in AmeriCorps. Promoting service to those over 55 is a priority in the national service law, yet we continually fell short of making a meaningful effort to enroll those individuals in national service even with the ability of giving their education award to a child or grandchild. People in this country, especially now, are eager to serve. Let's enable them to share their wisdom and skills with young adults who together make a powerful and gifted team.

#### Civic Education

Respected leaders in the country have found that civic education especially in the high school curriculum, is hard to find these days. Many states and local school districts have focused on this need and national leaders have pointed out the need now for a renewed effort to prioritize civic education. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor has been a passionate leader speaking on behalf of the need for civics as part of a meaningful high school education. Last year the Washington State Legislature passed RCW 28A.300.485 which requires each high school in the state to have a standalone civics education class requirement for every student. Model classes are being implemented in two school districts that have substantial enrolment of diverse students. Engaging students to serve is a highly effective way to get them involved in the

community and the placing Learn and Serve funding back into the CNCS budget would assist in supporting civic education.

## National Military Service and National Civilian Service- A Pathway to Citizenship for Dreamers

National military service offers a pathway for non citizens to obtain citizenship via their service to country. Those who were brought to our country as minor children and want to become citizens could do so by serving their country of residence via a long term commitment to national service thru AmeriCorps. While the national immigration laws are being discussed, language should be inserted in draft legislation that enables "dreamers" to be placed on a pathway to earn citizenship by serving two full time terms of service in AmeriCorps.

## Military Recruiting Efforts and Options to Refer Quality Applicants to AmeriCorps

While large numbers of applicants are not able to meet the high military medical standards for service, those with non severe medical issues rather than not being accepted could be referred to AmeriCorps as a possible way they can serve the country. Enabling AmeriCorps recruitment staff to formally connect with military recruiters to receive referrals of quality candidates who could meet the AmeriCorps standards of acceptance would be a good first step to engage more individuals to serve. This opportunity would also relieve the military recruiters from only having unfortunate news to offer an otherwise motivated applicant.

## Continuing Challenges Women Face who Join the Military

While building the Washington State VetCorps, the first AmeriCorps veterans program in the country, I had the opportunity of meeting with many women veterans who while designing this program also shared with me the responsibilities we would need to address while serving women who experienced Military Sexual Trauma (MST). I was shocked by these experiences and even more frustrated at how the military at all levels failed to act to support these women many of whom endured MST throughout their military career. For many it also led to Post Traumatic Stress issues that we were able to better understand and provide options so these women veterans could access high quality medical assistance.

While very difficult to address in any report, the Commission needs to make a statement regarding this issue if it expects more women to serve in national military service.