

NATIONAL CALL TO SERVICE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, today the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. FORD) and I introduced a bill called the National Call to Service Act. All of us are very aware of what happened on September 11; and as terrible as that day was and those events were, we have also seen some very positive things that have happened since.

We have seen the resurgence in patriotism. We have seen people who are more cordial and certainly have a greater desire to serve the country. In an attempt to harness this energy, the Call to Service Act would enlist 250,000 people, young people and old people alike, to serve our country. There are three aspects I would like to touch on very briefly here today.

First of all, rural and underserved areas often do not get much mention in a bill of this type. However, the National Call to Service Act does make sure that all areas of the country, particularly rural areas, are recognized. One example of this would be the teacher corps which would provide educational awards to attract and keep teachers in rural areas where it is very difficult to attract and keep teachers in such underserved areas. Another example would be public health programs where again rural areas are often neglected and underserved.

The second area of the National Call to Service Act I would like to call attention to is homeland defense. We have many young people who would like to serve the country, but yet do not want to go into full-time military service. This bill would provide young people with an opportunity to serve 18 months of active duty and then 18 months in a reserve status. In return, they get an educational award at the end of their service.

These young people would be used to guard vulnerable areas such as buildings, bridges, nuclear plants, airports and our borders. Also in the event of a national catastrophe involving bioterrorism, we need a great many people who could provide technical assistance in case of a health emergency.

Thirdly, one of our greatest resources in this country at the present time that I believe is greatly underutilized is our senior citizens. We currently have a great number of children who lack a caring adult in their life. They have no role model. We have 18 million fatherless children in the United States today. Roughly one-half of our young people growing up in this country are growing up without both biological parents. Seniors can certainly fill this gap. They can serve as tutors and mentors for these young people. It has been very well established that a good mentoring program can reduce absenteeism

from school by 50 percent, can reduce drug abuse by 50 percent, can reduce teenage pregnancy, violence and dropout rates significantly.

We think that by utilizing our seniors more effectively, we can serve the country well, and particularly the youth of our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. FORD), and he will discuss other aspects of the Call to Service Act.

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) for yielding; and I come from a State with a good football team, but I am delighted that the greatest mind, at least in my era of following college sports, would see fit to allow a young Member like me to partner with him to do something that in the long run will benefit young people for many, many years to come.

It is difficult to expand on what the gentleman from Nebraska has already said, but this bill gives my generation an opportunity to do something that we have not been able to do. For so long we have been reduced in a lot of ways, and some of us have chosen, to be spectators to conflict involving challenges to our values and freedoms. We are hopeful with our friends on the other side of the aisle and this bill's companion, S. 1792, which was introduced yesterday by Senators MCCAIN and BAYH, we are hopeful that this legislation will attract the support of Democrats and Republicans alike in both Chambers.

Mr. Speaker, the district of the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) and my district could not be any more different than they are. He is from a rural area in Nebraska; I am from an urban area in Memphis, Tennessee. We are hopeful that regardless of who Americans are, where they live, or how they may identify themselves politically, this bill will attract the support of all of our colleagues, largely because it invites involvement.

The gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) spoke about the need for this and how critical it is; but just to give more specifics, the purpose of the bill is to basically expand the AmeriCorps program. We propose a fivefold expansion of the traditional program, including new opportunities, as has already been mentioned, for senior service, work study and homeland defense. Specifically, over half of the program's expansion would be used to augment homeland defense in the areas of law enforcement and public health. Additionally, the legislation would provide new options for military enlistment, including expansion of the Montgomery GI bill and the establishment of a new 18-18-18 short-term enlistment option.

These provisions acknowledge that the GI bill has not kept pace with inflation, and a growing shortage exists

for entry-level service needs. The short-term option would qualify E1 level recruits for an \$18,000 education bonus after service of 18 months of active duty and 18 months of reserve duty.

Finally, in an ongoing effort to enhance national service, the bill also sets accountability standards and provides for a new demonstration choice voucher plan, not the voucher plan that my colleagues often think about, but a voucher plan providing grants for young people to apply in areas of public service.

We believe the Call to Service Act presents an immeasurable opportunity to seize on those attributes that define us as Americans and make us proud to serve in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding me this time and both Senators for their support; and I hope that all of our colleagues will see fit to support this important legislation.

COMMENDING MAJORITY LEADER
DICK ARMEY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to talk about a real stalwart in this House, and to thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) for his hard work and to remind our Members about what his leadership and effectiveness have meant to the success of our majority.

When DICK ARMEY first got to Washington, they said his ideas were out of step; but now America has caught up to Dick Armey. He stood firm against communism, and the Iron Curtain failed. He insisted that the welfare system was broken, and millions of Americans are now earning paychecks and have greater self-worth because they have entered the workplace. He took on a tough job of realigning our military base structure and our Armed Forces are more effective today because their bases better support their new mission.

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DICK ARMEY said repeatedly that punishing success was not part of the American dream. And he helped Presidents Reagan and Bush pass pro-growth tax cuts that raised our economic security. Many Americans now understand that a rising economic tide lifts all boats because DICK ARMEY explained it to them.

He reminded us that God is a part of all of our lives and millions of people now question why God has been driven out of our national lives. He fought laws that would have weakened our Constitution, and America remains the freest and most secure country in the world. He said that red tape and