

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION



UNITED WE SERVE: NATIONAL SERVICE AND THE FUTURE OF CITIZENSHIP

2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Wednesday, July 30, 2003

Falk Auditorium

1775 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20036

[TRANSCRIPT PREPARED FROM A TAPE RECORDING.]

C O N T E N T S

MODERATOR:

E.J. DIONNE, JR.
Co-editor, "United We Serve,"
Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution;
Columnist, Washington Post

PANELISTS:

LESLIE LENKOWSKY
CEO, Corporation for National and
Community Service

JANE EISNER
Columnist, Philadelphia Inquirer
Senior Fellow, Robert A. Fox
Leadership Program, University of Pennsylvania

SENATOR JOHN McCAIN (R-Ariz)

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION (With Senator McCain)

WILL MARSHALL
President and Founder,
Progressive Policy Institute

KAYLA MELTZER DROGOSZ
Co-editor, "United We Serve,"
Senior Research Analyst,
Governance Studies, The Brookings Institution

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

THIS IS AN UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT.

PROCEEDINGS



MR. DIONNE: The plan will be to have Les Lenkowsky give the first talk. When Senator McCain gets here, we'll have him up to the podium. Like many elected officials, he has a difficult schedule today. So I'm going to pause the program so that you can throw questions at Senator McCain. This is sort of the straight-talk express think tank today. So you can throw questions at Senator McCain, and then we'll resume the conversation on the panel and again bring the audience back in when the time comes.

I do want to welcome Les Lenkowsky's son, Matthew. Where are you, Matthew? I love children who honor their fathers, and he's a great kid. And I'll do the thank yous at the end, but I really do want to thank the close to 40 contributors to this book.

This has been one of the most fun and exciting projects I've worked on because it's a book that tries to bring together politicians and activists, policymakers, journalists and, yes, even some scholars and sociologists and philosophers to look at the issue of service from both the practical and theoretical angles. And working here, as I do, I like to think those two things are not in contradiction, one with the other.

We also have many people in the book who themselves gave service to their countries in various ways, including, notably, Senator McCain; people who served in the military, the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, VISTA, City Year, the civil rights movement, which we thought should be taken as a form of national service. Charlie Cobb, who was a SNCC activist back in the '60s, has a lovely essay in the book.

And all I'll say at the beginning is that Americans are always for national service, except when we're not. In our public conversation, we have all kinds of phrases that roll off the tongue: "With rights come responsibilities. "You can't raise the service issue without hearing someone cite John F. Kennedy: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

And yet, as we learned, for those of you who saw the Wall Street Journal editorial page today, the issue of service is not uncontroversial in this country. We have been arguing about how to find this balance between rights and responsibilities since the beginning of our republic.

And because this debate has been going on throughout our country's history, I think it really is a debate over how we Americans think of ourselves. It's a debate over how

we'll solve public problems and what we owe to our country and to each other. It's a debate we do need to have in every generation, for if we decide that there are no public things to which we will be willing to pledge at least some of our time and effort — if not our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor — then I think we will have abandoned our nation's experiment in liberty, rooted in the ideas of mutual assistance and democratic aspiration.

We have a wonderful group of people here today to talk about that. I'll introduce Senator McCain when he comes in. Let me just first introduce Les, and I'll introduce the rest of the panelists as we go along.

Les Lenkowsky is the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service. Before he was Professor of Philanthropic Studies and Public Policy at Indiana University-Purdue University, he was President of the Hudson Institute and President of the--Mr. President we've got to call you--President of the Institute for Educational Affairs. He was Deputy Director of the USIA and a Research Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

And I can say, from having worked with Les and been to a lot of panels and the like with him, he's somebody who deeply, deeply cares about this issue. Les, it's very good that you could join us today.

Thank you.



MR. LENKOWSKY: Thank you, E.J.

It really is a pleasure to be here today for the launching of "United We Serve: National Service and the Future of Citizenship."

I hope this volume will be essential reading for anyone who wants to understand why many Americans are passionate for national service, and that it will continue

to expose Americans who may not share those views to the role that national service plays in making America's communities stronger.

As a book that brings together the voices of politicians, activists, policymakers, journalists, and others who are both supporters and critics of the national service movement, it also reflects the diversity of national service opportunities, including those supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service, such as Senior Corps, Learn and Serve America, and AmeriCorps.

In talking about the future of national service, let me start by making it clear, notwithstanding today's rhetorical questions in the Wall Street Journal, there should be no mistake about my own support of national service.

As CEO of the corporation and a long-time board member, I have enjoyed the privilege of meeting thousands of participants in the national service programs the corporation supports. This experience has strengthened my own support for national service and my belief that we should continue investing in it.

I know the contributions national service makes to strengthening our neighborhoods, and I support the role it plays in President Bush's agenda for our communities.

Over the past 2 years, I have visited Senior Corps members working side-by-side with law enforcement officials to safeguard our communities. I have toured the worst parts of some of our cities and seen AmeriCorps members doing their best to bring health and safety to the afflicted, and I have watched students learn about our civic and historical traditions through service learning courses, in which they strengthened their minds by engaging their hearts and hands in service to others and developing, in the process, habits of civic engagement that will last throughout their long and promising lifetimes.

These are the results in just a few communities. Overall, the national service system has come a long way toward helping meet vital needs, such as hunger, health care, education, senior companionship and public safety. And the participants in these programs are reinforcing, and in some cases forming, the infrastructure that leads community volunteers to help their neighbors and their nation.

While on leave from teaching during the past two years, it has also been a privilege to be a part of a team that has been working to strengthen and reform these programs so that they can serve more communities well and offer that service better.

In requesting new support for national service, President Bush has also articulated clear principles for strengthening the corporation's programs, including sound management, accountability for results, and long-term sustainability.

We have worked diligently to put these into place. With President Bush's leadership and the enhanced interest of members of Congress in supporting the national service programs that are so vital to their districts, I believe we have an opportunity to realize the promise of national service that reaches into every community.

Although much of the attention to the corporation has recently been focused on the financial resources our programs receive, some attention has also fallen upon the serious and longstanding challenges in managing our national service programs. These challenges are not new, and we are now confronting them.

By engaging Congress in a discussion about how we make accountability for results a hallmark of our programs, we can conclude a process that has been long overdue and make great progress toward the expansion the President and others have embraced. We look forward to the prospect of a Citizen Service Act that will help the Agency further

its effort to conquer these longstanding issues, and in so doing, earn the confidence and support of Congress and the public.

President Bush believes in national service because he values its role in building the capacity of our nation's voluntary organizations. The President also knows that a nation of individuals answering his call to service will improve our characters as individuals, our lives as communities, and our nation as a whole.

It has been my pleasure to work with Steven Goldsmith and John Bridgeland, not only on our submission to "United We Serve," but to advance the President's ideals for national service.

Other contributors to this volume offer different reasons, some of which I am sure we will discuss today. I look forward to hearing those thoughts and to the discussion that will follow. I also want to thank Brookings for hosting this discussion, for publishing this book, and for its ongoing interest in discussing the future of national service and other issues that shape our communities.

Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

MR. DIONNE: By the way, for those who are not avid Wall Street Journal editorial page readers, as I am, the editorial that Les just referred to has Les asking a rhetorical question, "Even if AmeriCorps is well run, do we really need it?" he now asks. "That's a good question."

They follow with their own answer, which is, "Our answer is, 'no,'" and I--

MR. LENKOWSKY: Mine is different.

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: Right. And that's what set this off.

In Washington, people often cancel out when they discover or read something in the newspapers that puts them in the middle of controversy. So thank you for actually showing up today.

I'm also glad, by the way, that Les noted that the book does include skeptical voices about national service. I think one of the problems with national service is that it sounds so nice that it can't be serious. And I think the fact that there is serious dissent about it tells you something about how serious it is.

And while we won't get into this in detail today, the book also includes a very good debate between Bob Litan, one of our editors, who unfortunately couldn't be here with

us today, and Bruce Chapman over whether there should be compulsory service, and we went to the great controversy that Charlie Rangel started with that famous op-ed piece of his on whether there should be compulsory service.

But thank you for all of those nice plugs for the book, Les.

I would like to introduce now Jane Eisner, who is a columnist for the Philadelphia Inquirer, and a Senior Fellow at the Fox Leadership Program at the University of Pennsylvania. And before becoming a nationally syndicated columnist, she served as a reporter, city hall bureau chief, foreign correspondent, and in many editing positions for two decades at the Inquirer, including editorial page editor.

Her column now appears on the commentary page on... Thursday, Jane, is when we look for you now?

MS. EISNER: On Sundays.

MR. DIONNE: Sundays. Now that she has joined the academic world, she is still writing the column, but also has a lot to do. It used to appear three times a week, correct? Which is very hard, I can tell you.

She's also just one of the best people I know in journalism or anywhere else. Jane and I have worked together before, but I was especially excited by an idea she will talk about in the course of the discussion today, how you link the idea of service with the idea of active political participation, and she's talked about an idea called "First Vote," which I commend to you all, and which you are about to learn much more about.

Jane?

By the way, everyone should mike themselves up, if they're not miked yet.



MS. EISNER: Thank you so much. I am happy to talk to you, expecting that I may get interrupted by a Senator.

I want to especially thank E.J. We have a "mutual admiration society" going, but no other journalist in America shares my passion to think and write about civic culture as he does.

And now I can be interrupted.

[Laughter.]

[Senator McCain joins the panel.]

MR. DIONNE: At the risk of being a Washington cliché event, we will turn to the elected official here. It is great of Senator McCain to join us today. He has a very good essay in this book as well.

You don't have to introduce John McCain, but I will say a few words: that he's been involved, deeply involved, in the national service debate. He has introduced, and then reintroduced, the Call to Service Act with Senator Bayh. Also, he's worked with Senator Kennedy on this issue.

He was first elected to represent the State of Arizona in the House in 1982, after a 22-year career as a Naval aviator, earning honors, including the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, the Legion of Merit, the Purple Heart, and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

He recently wrote, "Worth Fighting For," with Mark Salter. Senator McCain, as many of you know, used to refer to all of the journalists covering him during his presidential campaign as "Trotskyists."

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: And so what I really wanted to do today is to introduce the United States Senate's leading Trotskyist, John McCain.

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: But instead, what I would say is, given his service and sacrifice for our country, I don't think anyone has a higher standing or more authority to talk about this issue than John McCain.

Senator, thank you so for much for coming.



SENATOR McCAIN: Thank you, E.J. Thank you very much, and I apologize for being late. It only took 30 minutes to get here from the Capitol today, making me more in favor of increased transit funding than I have been in the past.

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: This is being recorded, right?

SENATOR McCAIN: But not pork.

[Laughter.]

SENATOR McCAIN: I'd like to just make a couple of comments, if you don't mind, and I am pleased to be with this panel, and I'm pleased always to be back here at Brookings, and thank you for taking the time to be with us on what I think is a critical issue to the future of the nation.

I was a skeptic concerning AmeriCorps, in particular, and the concept of paying people or compensating people for volunteerism, and community activities and service to one's country, and I initially opposed the AmeriCorps bill.

And I am happy to tell you that over the years, due to my close contact with and exposure to AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, and many other volunteer organizations around this nation, I've come to believe that it's the very essence of patriotism because I believe the essence of patriotism is service to a cause greater than one's self-interests.

And I particularly saw this in the presidential campaign. And I note the presence of my dear friend, Hattie Babbitt, here today, and so I am compelled to repeat that I ask your sympathy for the families of the State of Arizona because Barry Goldwater from Arizona ran for President of the United States, and Morris Udall from Arizona ran for President of the United States, and Bruce Babbitt from Arizona ran for President of the United States, and I from Arizona ran for President of the United States.

Arizona may be the only state in America where mothers don't tell their children that some day they can grow up and be President of the United States.

[Laughter.]

SENATOR McCAIN: So I believe that 9/11 attenuated and emphasized the need for all of us to serve. I believe that 9/11, as traumatic and tragic as it was, served as a catalyst for all Americans, young people especially. And I also believe that we failed many Americans when they said, "What can I do to fight this threat to our very being, the very fiber, and strength and body of America," and we told them that, well, they should take a trip or go shopping.

I don't think that was the right response. I think the right response was to immediately fund and expand a myriad of programs, including one that Senator Bayh and I have been working on. It was passed by the Senate Armed Services Committee and passed by the

Senate to allow someone to serve in the military for 15 months and return for \$15,000 in educational benefits.

If there's anything we're short of today, my friends, it's soldiers. If there's anything we're short of today, it's security, people to secure our reservoirs, our train stations, our nuclear power plants, all of that. You don't have to be high-tech trained in order to provide a lot of the security that every report we see is lacking in certain areas which make us continue to be vulnerable to attacks by terrorists.

So I think that we had an opportunity, but I think we still have that opportunity because I believe, from my experience, that young Americans are more patriotic and more motivated to serve their country than I was in my generation. I believe that young Americans are imbued with a sense of love of this country and the things we believe in, and they know that no one gains more from the experience of this kind of service than the person who serves.

And so I know that there have been difficulties--financial difficulties--in AmeriCorps. We all know that. We've been made aware of it time after time. One, it's not the only agency of government where there's financial difficulties; second of all, that does not detract in any way from the purpose and goal of what this is all about, AmeriCorps just being one of many ways we can serve.

So I hope we can get the \$100 million, and maybe we can get into that later on. I hope we can get the proper funding and the proper reforms made, but for us to somehow believe that difficulties in administering a program have anything to do with the virtues of the program is just damn foolishness and will be used as an attack on things that we believe in, which really have no bearing on it whatsoever.

I want to thank all of you for being here. Probably the most uplifting experiences in my life have been to have interface, and observe, and be with young Americans who serve in AmeriCorps. And, older Americans can also serve, by the way, and do. Maybe it's because I'm growing a little old that I'm focused more on young Americans than older ones because of the obvious fact that they are the future of this nation.

So I hope that we can generate the support that's necessary. I would think these programs not only need the status quo, but dramatic expansion, and I hope that that's the way we can spread freedom and democracy not only throughout this country, where the job is unfinished, but throughout the world, where we have, in my view, a noble cause.

Thank you, E.J., and thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. DIONNE: Thank you, Senator.

Your staff had told us that you would have to come in and out today. And so what I thought we could do is, at this point, open it up for questions to you, and then we would continue on with our panel. And I'd like to ask you one myself because you did bring up this issue of mismanagement at AmeriCorps.

Correct me if I'm wrong, it's my understanding that the only form of "mismanagement" they are accused of is signing up too many volunteers, which is different from, say, ripping off money or mishandling money. Is that a correct understanding of what the problem is here, the combination of signing up too many volunteers and not having money in a trust fund and how we are supposed to think about that, in terms of the future of AmeriCorps?

SENATOR McCAIN: Well, as you say, there were too many people signed up, there was not close enough scrutiny of the funds and how they were dispensed. But there's been no allegation of criminality, there's been no allegation of corruption. The allegations are of mismanagement. And those, as I say, I don't excuse it. None of us excuse that.

But somehow it is now being twisted into an attack on the very core and belief of what this program is all about and what this concept is all about, to me, is...well, it happens in this town. We live in a very cynical place, and enemies will use any weapons at their disposal, but I hope rational Americans will recognize that this is a difficult period for AmeriCorps, but it has nothing to do with the founding principles and beliefs.

MR. DIONNE: Les, you said you wanted to say something.

MR. LENKOWSKY: I agree with the Senator on this, that we do have an Inspector General report now. It's available on the website. People can read this for themselves, and they will see exactly what the Senator is referring to.

We needed to put in place better procedures. They go all the way back to the beginning of this organization, to the very law that created it, and we are putting those in place right now. I mean, a lot of the problems that the Senator alluded to just a minute ago, and others, we are in the process of fixing and very well along in the process of fixing right now.

SENATOR McCAIN: And here's what it boils down to, my friends. Does government have a role to play in encouraging these kinds of activities on the part of young Americans? I have come down strongly in favor of the belief that government does play a role.

The Peace Corps has been around since John F. Kennedy, I believe in 1961, and it has been an overwhelming success. Have you ever met anybody who served in the Peace Corps that didn't say it was the greatest experience of their life? So the concept has been proved. The Peace Corps would not have worked without the federal government involvement. So that debate will probably continue between liberals and conservatives.

But I also believe that conservatives also believe that there is a role for government in our society. We're not Libertarians. We're conservatives. And somehow to allege that there is no role for government in encouraging this kind of activity, I think flies in the face of history. And so if I sound a little excited about it, I grow weary of it, to tell you the truth. I grow weary of it.

I'm sorry, E.J.

MR. DIONNE: Does somebody want to jump in here?

Mark?

PARTICIPANT: [Off microphone.] Yes, maybe I'd just offer Les a chance to clear the air a little more about--

MR. DIONNE: Could we go, first, to Senator McCain, and then we'll--

MR. LENKOWSKY: I'll be glad to answer.

MR. DIONNE: That was to Les. Does somebody else want to join in?

Please, the lady back there. Thank you.

PARTICIPANT: [Off microphone.] [Inaudible] and I want to thank Senator McCain for mentioning older Americans as part of this issue, also.

MR. DIONNE: Could you take our mike there. Thanks.

PARTICIPANT: I wanted to ask you, as a follow-up question, could you talk a little bit more about the strategy on the Senate side for the \$100 million.

SENATOR McCAIN: Well, as you know, the House of Representatives passed the emergency supplemental and left out money for NASA, which is very badly needed in light of the disaster; firefighting, which I don't have to tell you, anyone from the West who knows how important that funding is; and, of course, AmeriCorps. And someone from the House of Representatives will have to explain that rationale to you far better than I can, as I say with typical Senate snobbery.

[Laughter.]

SENATOR McCAIN: But the fact is that that didn't happen, and they're out of session. We come back after Labor Day, as you know. I am told that if we act quickly after Labor Day and put this \$100 million back in, then it will be okay. But so far there has been no indication that the House of Representatives has intentions to do that.

The President wants the money, is my understanding, the administration wants the money, and the Senate wants the money, and so therefore we're going to have to put on a lot of pressure from people outside the government. Constituents are going to have to... people are going to have to hear from their constituents on this issue, and the President I think is going to have to weigh in more heavily.

MR. DIONNE: Sir?

MR. COBB: I'm Charlie Cobb, with allAfrica.com.

MR. DIONNE: God bless you, Charlie. Thank you for coming.

MR. COBB: Yes, I have not met a Peace Corps volunteer who hasn't said it's been the greatest experience in their lives. But I'm wondering, when you say the Peace Corps would not have worked without the role of the federal government, how much of the Peace Corps' success has to do with the fact that the volunteers are working outside of this country and, in a sense, buffered from the politics that operates when you're working inside the government and inside this country?

SENATOR McCAIN: Well, I believe, Charlie, that the work that a lot of AmeriCorps people do, City Year, for example, they're a long way from the political scene, and they're a long way from parts of America, as a lot of us know.

And so I think a lot of the work they do, particularly in the inner cities in America, is not that dissimilar from some lesser-developed nations when you look at the environment in which they work, and that's where they're most needed, and that's where the success is, and that's where the greatest success stories are, because in the inner cities in America is where a lot of the need is. Rural America is the same way in some economically, poorly off situations.

But I see a great similarity between Peace Corps and AmeriCorps and, yes, the federal government had to be involved in the Peace Corps to provide transportation, et cetera, but so does the federal government have to be involved to train people to do this work.

So I think that I see the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps doing very much the same mission, only different geographics.

MR. DIONNE: Could I follow up on Charlie's question? Because I think in the debate over AmeriCorps from the beginning there was great concern that, ah, these volunteers would become, God forbid, political. Jane was going to talk a little bit about that. And so there's always been some pressure on this program because it was a domestic program. The fears that Charlie was talking about are there.

SENATOR McCAIN: Well, I pray to God that they are political. I pray to God that they do get involved in running for office and advocating issues they believe in. They understand better than I do some of the challenges that we face as a nation because they

are working with them every day. I pray to God that every person who serves in AmeriCorps will become politically involved. And if they happen to be Democrats or vegetarians or Libertarians, it doesn't matter to me.

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: Even Trotskyists.

SENATOR McCAIN: What matters to me is these young men and women have had the experience of working with people who are less well off than my family is and understand better the challenges that they face than I and most of my colleagues do.

MR. DIONNE: I thought that's what he might say.

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: Over here. And then what I'd like to do is the lady over there. Yes, thanks, ma'am. Do we have another question for Senator McCain? Maybe we could bring a couple together, and then we could go back to the panel, and the Senator can stay as long as his schedule lets him.

Ma'am?

MS. SCHUELLER: I'm Kate Schueller with Congressional Quarterly.

I'm wondering, you had mentioned that the enemies of this program are using the funding problems as a weapon. What do you think that AmeriCorps would have to do to overcome that and what will you be doing to work to convince people that that is no longer an excuse?

SENATOR McCAIN: I think we have to look at the record. I think we have to look at the record of success of the different programs, and the best illustration of that, of course, are people, the men and women, not all young--I thank you for reminding me--that have been involved in these programs.

We have kept ample amount of statistics about children who have learned to read and many of the successes of the other programs, and so we have to just chronicle the successes and record of AmeriCorps and other programs, in my view, and I think we can make the case.

MR. LENKOWSKY: I want to just add very quickly, and we have to continue to redouble our efforts to manage, and we are doing that. We have put together a terrific team. I'll be returning to the university this fall, but there are going to be terrific people in place to manage this program. The board is taking an active role. We are doing everything Congress has asked us to do, and we will continue to do that in the hope that it will build that confidence.

MR. DIONNE: While we get a mike to the gentleman in the back--he had his hand up first--I just wanted to ask you, Senator, if it's so hard to get this \$100 million, what are the prospects for the dramatic expansion that you, and Senator Bayh, and others have been trying to push?

MR. DIONNE: The President of the United States has traveled this country and given speeches very strongly advocating these programs. I hope that the administration--to be honest with you, it depends on the degree of engagement on the part of the administration.

Every year, for the last two years, some nice young men have come over to talk with me from the White House and talk about how strong that the administration supports and how we're going to get all of this, and nothing ever happens. I hope they come over, and we have a nice conversation and something happens. I don't know whether it will or not.

MR. DIONNE: If any of those nice men from the White House are in the room, please identify yourselves.

SENATOR McCAIN: They're very polite young men.

MR. DIONNE: Sir?

MR. CHRISTIANSON: Garrett Christianson from the Department of Justice.

I was just wondering what the Senator and other panelists' opinion on, somewhere down the road, making national service, in some sort, mandatory.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you.

SENATOR McCAIN: The problem with national service is that when you get into the details of it, it's very difficult. For example, the military I think now has 1.4 million people, and if you wanted to take--how many, Les, people turn 18 every year?

MR. LENKOWSKY: About 3 million.

SENATOR McCAIN: About 3 million Americans turn 18, and we probably need about 100- to 200,000 in the military. I'm not sure you'd know what to do with them.

Second of all, I would rather provide young Americans the opportunity than forcing somebody into doing this kind of work. I think there's a drastic difference there. I think if you forced people into national service, then you would end up into the WPA stories and those kinds of things.

But this also brings us to a point that I puzzled over, which is not the subject of this meeting, but I'll mention it briefly. What happens when we have fewer and fewer

Americans in decision-making positions who have served their country in any capacity? That bothers me. That really bothers me, but I don't know an answer to it, so I certainly won't address it any further.

MR. DIONNE: Mark Shields, by the way, has a piece in the book, noting that it was written after the vote on the Iraq War, that only one member of Congress had a child--a son, as it happens--on active duty as an enlisted person in the entire Congress, which just goes to the Senator's question.

SENATOR McCAIN: By the way, which also leads us to we left out the children of the men and women in the military with a tax rebate. We also have not been able to resolve the issue of some very badly needed benefits for Guard and Reservists who are on active duty. Those seem to have been lost in our priority list.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you, Senator.

Last question, just for the moment, and then I want to let everybody else talk, and we'll go back to--go ahead. Thanks for coming.

MR. MITCHELL: Senator, Gary Mitchell, from the Mitchell Report. I want to come back to your point about the success of the Peace Corps, and perhaps this builds on the question that Charlie Cobb asked, and that is I'm wondering if one of the reasons that the Peace Corps has been successful is that it enjoyed a period of time when the Congress, in particular, and perhaps the country, politically, was sort of less-divisive, more inclined to favor things of this nature.

And, A, if that's the case, what's the likelihood that we can grow programs like this, and they can really develop a root structure and be sustained, politically?

SENATOR McCAIN: I think that the more people who serve, the more likely it is you're going to continue to have this base of support.

I think that the opposition was always out there, but it was largely muted until this financial thing came up, and then that was viewed as an opening, as I mentioned earlier, to try to bring down the program.

But I think time is on the side of the supporters because every person who has served is a disciple and an advocate for the program, that I know of, and they are very active and very vocal. I hear from them all of the time, and I hope that those who are not as supportive as I am would hear from as well.

By the way, I think Hattie Babbitt could have been President of the United States. The wrong one ran, I think.

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: Do you have a response? Do you want to announce your candidacy right here?

Speaking of Presidents of the United States, Jane Eisner, I already introduced her. She's a brilliant, public-spirited, all around great person.

Jane, take it away.

MS. EISNER: Thank you. I am not running for President.

My contribution to United We Serve is called First Vote. The idea began as a somewhat impulsive, I hope creative response to a mothering dilemma. It has now become a personal and professional obsession. I'm spending this year as a Senior Fellow in residence at the Fox Leadership Program at the University of Pennsylvania to research, and teach, and write a book about young people and voting: why they don't vote, why it matters that they do, what we can do to change that.

In my mind, the link to national service is crucial and the greatest challenge, in fact, that we face in defining citizenship for the next generation. Let me explain.

I've been fascinated by the service movement for probably a decade now as a journalist and as a citizen myself. I saw firsthand how the King Day of Service in Philadelphia began, grew from a sort of barely organized, hapless attempt at cleaning up a small spot in North Philadelphia to now a massive, very well-run, yearly event.

I covered the President's Summit on Volunteerism with great hope. I have dragged my kids to church clean-ups and to soup kitchens, and I've watched as they have on their own now chosen their own ways to serve, working in a needy public school or in a nursing home.

Like others, I'm sure, I was certain that this growing spirit of service would translate into the more traditional habits of citizenship and help reverse the dangerous decline in voting and other forms of civic engagement. It looks like I was wrong.

Young people are serving in record numbers, especially among the elite--the truth is you can scarcely be accepted to a school like Penn without having umpteen hours of community service on your resume--yet their voting rate is abysmal. And I don't think that we can dismiss this as just a sign of the times.

It's been 30 years since the franchise was extended to 18-, 19- and 20-year-olds. It did not happen overnight. Extending the vote to 18-, 19- and 20-year-olds was debated in Congress since 1943, and came up again in the '50s and then in the '60s.

It was not only a matter of fairness because of the draft — the idea that if you're old enough to fight, you're old enough to vote — there was also this explicit hope--and when you read the congressional testimony on these hearings, you can see it time and again--a

hope that younger people, with their just inherent energy and idealism, would improve civic and political life, that they would improve the culture, the debate, the way we engage in that way.

The long-sought goal of adult universal suffrage was achieved with the passage of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment in 1971. And what happened since then? Unlike formerly disenfranchised segments of our society, African Americans, women, immigrants -- whose level of participation grew over time -- after they won the right to vote, for the young, the trend was reversed. 1972 was the high mark of participation in presidential elections, and with a slight little blip in 1992, it has literally been all downhill since.

So, in the all-important 2000 presidential election, where every vote counted, although one might say some counted more than others, but nonetheless, every vote did count, and what did we have--26.7 percent of 18-year-olds reported voting in that election, barely more than 1 in 4 18-year-olds.

So, now, we have this civic conundrum among the young: an appetite for service, but not for taking it to the next basic step and voting. And how do we make that link? How do we stop what I fear may be the natural result of this trend, which is replacing voting with service?

It can almost be a kind of privatization of citizenship, where, let's face it, it can be much more satisfying to clean up with park on a Saturday morning with a bunch of your school friends than do the hard work of figuring out how the park got dirty in the first place, who's responsible for it: Is it the mayor? Is it the City Council? Is it the neighborhood organization? How can the park be better maintained? And then who do I vote for in the next election who would make a difference?

It's one thing to volunteer in the needy public school; it's another thing to figure out what happens in that school when I leave. Who's responsible for it? What are the right public policy steps to take to ameliorate that situation?

Clearly, civic education needs to be strengthened, to help young people understand those links, these links to policy. But there's something else that I'm discovering in my research, and here's why I come back to First Vote and what it represents.

The idea grew out of my own experience, taking my oldest daughter to vote for the first time. She had registered, when receiving her driver's license. The much-maligned Motor Voter program does work, I saw. And there it was May of 2002, very important gubernatorial primary in Pennsylvania.

I was clearly more excited about this than she was, but that's okay. I asked around in the days before for some advice on an appropriate gift to mark the occasion for her. I had it all planned out. I bought her a book of Walt Whitman poetry, which I'm not sure she's opened yet, but that's okay. I wanted to, I had this idyllic scene. We have a neighborhood polling place. We were going to walk there together. Of course, this is a

teenager, so it never turns out the way you think. We were running late. We had to drive. Okay. But we got there.

But here's what really disappointed me. The lack of a fuss. The poll workers clapped a little bit when I said that this was her first time voting, but that was it. All of the other ways we mark a right of passage in this society, whether it's going to the prom or taking the first steps or the first communion or the bar mitzvah party, this essential right of passage for young people goes totally unremarked by all the institutions in their lives.

So I wrote about this, about the need to create a civic ritual, and the idea caught on. I heard from readers all over the country. There's a young woman who goes to a small school just outside Boston who created a birthday card and sent it to every one of her classmates when they turned 18 years old. Attached to it was a registration form to register to vote.

A man from California wrote to me and told me how, in his little community, every time you went to vote, you got a little slip of paper, and you could redeem it for a free cup of coffee any time that day. These are all ways in which the community celebrated this civic ritual.

There are a bunch of Rotarians, these really sweet guys in suburban Philadelphia, and twice a year, before the primary and before the general election, they enlist student leaders from a local public high school, set up a chair and tables in the lunch room and have the kids get their friends to come up and register to vote, and then the Rotarians help them out. It wouldn't do if the Rotarians asked them themselves, but having the kids ask them really helps.

And sure enough, in that high school, the number of graduates who have registered is generally 80 to 90 percent. Overall, in this country, it's about 50 percent, which is an utter amazement to me that anyone can graduate from high school without being registered to vote and that we allow them to do so.

But I think that this is more than just a sweet ritual. It is actually supported by much more serious research. Now, there's not a lot of good research on what can effectively spur young people to vote. No one has actually been able to prove that Rock the Vote works, great as it may seem, or that other programs, though they are very well intentioned, also work.

But there has been some research done by Green and Gerber at Yale, and it turns out that turnout among the young will increase if you ask them to vote, strange as that may seem. Face-to-face canvassing increased turnout in a very, very well-constructed national research project that these two professors did by 8 to 12 percent. Now, that's a lot of votes. It could have changed the 2000 presidential race. It could have changed a great many other things had turnout been different. By 8 to 12 percent just by simply knocking on doors and face-to-face canvassing, not asking to vote for a particular person or cause, just asking them to vote. And of course, when you ask one person in a

household to vote, the spinoff is enormous because the other people in the household may then be spurred to go to the polls as well.

Other research done by the League of Women Voters showed that more than being driven by issues or causes or even driven by a candidate, what motivated young people to vote was a community around them that valued voting. If they feel that they are doing something valued by their community, and especially their peers, they will vote.

Well, it makes sense, doesn't it? I mean, if you know young people, they are more likely to vote if their parents do. We know that for sure. And yet what is the message that we have given them repeatedly? Voting isn't important. Journalists, newspapers say all the time that voter turnout is going to be low. Politicians cynically urge people not to vote through negative campaigning or, in Philadelphia, much worse tactics than that. Schools don't advocate voting. Employers don't give their time off to vote.

Just think of what could happen if the message changed, and particularly if we sought to more explicitly forge this link between service and voting.

A year from now I hope to have better answers for you on how to do that, but I'm very hopeful about this next generation. Their willingness to serve and to craft a new kind of active citizenship must be embraced. We can't turn our backs on it or pretend that the passion can be rekindled at a later, more convenient date. That is why the refusal to fully fund AmeriCorps is so utterly wrong and really dangerous.

Elsewhere in *United We Serve*, in this wonderful book, Harry Boyt writes, and here I'm quoting, "Young people invoke their feelings of powerlessness to explain their preference for service over politics." And he says, "The remedy for powerlessness is the experience of power, not service."

In my mind, there's no more powerful tool, as a citizen, than voting.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. DIONNE: Thank you.

I like that approach learned from the "Philadelphia machine," that to get somebody to the polls, you give them a gift.

MS. EISNER: Yes.

MR. DIONNE: I wonder if that's actionable?

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: And I very much wanted Jane, here and in the book, because the subtitle is, "National Service and the Future of Citizenship," and I think it is one of the essential questions for the service movement as to how service leads to other forms of political engagement.

It's great to have Will Marshall here. Will has written more speeches about citizenship for more politicians than anyone you will ever meet anywhere, and they're good speeches. I can always pick out a Will Marshall speech no matter who is actually the name on the top of the speech or the person giving it.

He is the President and founder of the Progressive Policy Institute and served as Policy Director of its sister organization, the Democratic Leadership Council, from the organization's inception in 1985.

He's co-editor of "Mandate for Change," a Director of the Progressive Foundation. He has worked for North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt, and the late Representative Gillis Long of Louisiana, and also for Virginia Lieutenant Governor Dick Davis.

He is the author of "Citizenship and National Service," which helped lay the groundwork for AmeriCorps. And Will wrote his piece in our book with Mark McGee. It's very good, Mark, that you could join us today as well.

Will Marshall, thanks for coming.



MR. MARSHALL: Thank you, E.J. It's a great pleasure to be here, and thanks to you and Kayla for putting together this book, which, as Les said, is a great sort of introduction to the national service debate and to the sort of multiplicity of interpretations and views about what national service is and can be. And it's great to be here with Les.

I'm particularly glad you had this opportunity to put the lie to what we read in the paper today. It's probably not the first time that, in an excess of ideological zeal, the Wall Street Journal editorial page has made a mistake and gotten it wrong.

I should say that we've been honored to work with Les, particularly when he was running the Hudson Institution, on this issue of national service. He's always brought a rigorous empiricism to this debate, and that's important because, as much as I'm an evangelical person when it comes to national service, this enterprise has to grow in an organic, sustainable way, you know, with a relentless focus on results and, yes, good management. So, Les, I'm glad you're there to make sure this grows in the proper way.

Look, our job in this book was to think bigger about citizenship and talk about how you take national service to scale. You know, we achieved, by the end of the '90s, a really great beachhead in the national service, but we saw, around the time of the 2000 election, a chance for a real breakout from that beachhead.

There was kind of a rare alignment of political stars. Bill Clinton was moving off the scene. Bill Clinton was the inspiration for AmeriCorps and the person who saved it, year after year, when House Republicans tried to kill it, but he was also a lightning rod for political opposition that I think, in some ways, made it harder for Republicans to support an enterprise that has much to recommend itself to conservatives, as we always argued.

And then I was inspired by the campaign that Senator McCain ran and his call for us to think about serving something larger than ourselves, an approach that challenged voters and citizens and didn't pander to them. And it struck us that he would be the natural crossover candidate; you know, the Republican who could join forces with the New Democrats within the--the ardent supporters of national service and try to put national service on a sturdier and wider political foundation, and he did that.

As he said here, he went from skepticism to an embrace of this enterprise. Then came 9/11, which obviously triggered a tremendous desire to serve among young people in this country, and I think it changed the Bush administration's outlook on this issue. They had been planning a volunteer-oriented effort, but after 9/11 the President came out in January of 2002 with his USA Freedom Corps proposal.

Now, that was a big breakthrough because the Bush family, his father particularly, had been associated with the "Points of Light" approach, extolling private volunteerism and saying, in some way, there's a conflict between that and national service, but certainly not supporting what the Republicans at that time were pleased to call "paid volunteerism."

So we've got some ideas in this book about how to take this enterprise to a larger scale, but I have to say it seems kind of beside the point, when we're right now in the middle of a huge battle about saving what we've got, and I think we ought to talk about that a little bit, because despite this favorable alignment of political stars, things took a turn for the worse toward the end of last year and the beginning of this year.

And in February, Congress adopted a "cut and cap" approach to national service. They cut the operating budget of the Corporation by 30 percent--this is in addition to the nonfunding for the trust fund that we heard about a while ago--and capped the core, AmeriCorps membership at 50,000 members, despite the fact that George Bush had gone before the nation and pledged to expand it to 75,000 and the fact that Senators Bayh, McCain, and some of us wanted to go to 250,000 over 10 years, a much more dramatic expansion.

And then, of course, last Friday, we had a real blow when the House refused, as Senator McCain pointed out, to pass \$100 million for AmeriCorps and abruptly left town, angering the Senate, but also leaving us mystified as to what this administration really wants because the President has talked about expansion, he's embraced AmeriCorps, he's put it in, to be sure, under a rubric where there's a lot of other moving parts, but he has done that, and yet the House Republicans seem determined to roll this program back.

The ostensible rationale is mismanagement. Tom DeLay said, "They violated a statute. Should we give them \$100 million for that?"

To which I reply, "Should we deprive about 20,000 young Americans of the chance to continue serving their country this year because of management problems at the Corporation?" These people, after all, are folks who, in part, are responding to this President's summons to serve their country after 9/11, and yet a White House spokesperson recently opposed this emergency spending request for AmeriCorps.

We're going to talk about what that really means. There is a sharp decline in the membership role this year. It means that tens of thousands of people won't get the chance to serve and the chance to earn a college scholarship to help them go to college. It means that almost half of 900 AmeriCorps programs could shut their doors--great programs, like City Year, one of our favorites, one of everybody's favorites, surely--5 of 14 programs not funded. We could see a cut in the City Year Corps by two-thirds this year. Teach for America, which recruits top-notch graduates of our elite universities to go teach in inner-city schools, looking at 17 or 20 programs losing funding, the number of their membership declining from about 2,400 to 575.

So this is devastating. We're talking about kids who aren't going to get tutored, and homeless folks who aren't going to get services, and low-income housing that won't be built and after-school programs that will not be fully staffed, and seniors won't get the help to allow them to live independently and more.

What we're looking at is destroying the infrastructure built up over the last 10 years, going back to about the size of AmeriCorps in 1994. And maybe it's not as dire as all of this, and Les can give a more optimistic scenario, but this is what we hear from the people who--

[Tape change: T-1A to T-1B.]

MR. MARSHALL: --running effective programs on the ground and wondering why a political embroglio in Washington threatens them with having to cut them sharply back.

I believe that this mismanagement charge is a bit of a phony, that it really masks an ideological objection to AmeriCorps, which has been a constant since the beginning of this debate back in the late '80s. You know, the House of Representatives is an ideological hothouse. It is that on both sides. But, clearly, there's been a cadre of House Republicans who have been against this from the beginning.

I remember wonderful, lurid quotes like Dick Armey calling it a "welfare program for aspiring yuppies," and Newt Gingrich deriding what he called "coerced volunteerism." And as I said earlier, we seem to be back in this old debate that pits paid volunteerism, as they call national service, against real volunteerism, which is uncoerced and untainted by any kind of quid pro quo. And I think it's an utterly false choice.

America's civic volunteerist traditions are a great glory of our civilization, but we're talking about something different, and additional to and supplemental of those efforts. We're talking about full-time, rigorous, year-round service growing and targeted on huge national needs that are not being adequately met by either the government or by the private sector or civic and philanthropic efforts. There is no real conflict between them, but some persist in claiming there is.

There is a silver lining in this political debauch, I think, and that is a tremendous outpouring of political support all over this country in reaction to this action in Congress.

Forty-four governors, 250 mayors, 79 Senators, 233 House members, and a whole slew of business leaders have all been galvanized by these cuts to action and have found their voice on the issue, which bodes well for the long term.

The President, meanwhile, has proposed a bill that would take us next year to 75,000 volunteers and has the money, apparently, in his authorization request to do that, but in Congress they don't want to go that far. They're talking about going to 55,000 volunteers.

And so I guess there's a fundamental question as to whether this administration is going to--who is going to drive the bus on national service, whether it's going to be this President and the administration or House Republicans, who want to either drive it very slowly or throw the gears into reverse.

So I won't go into what we propose for expanding the national service. Maybe we can do that in the discussion to follow here, but I just want to say that, like everybody else who has been involved in national service, we were inspired by the great William James essay of 1910, "The Moral Equivalent of War." And in that, James called for a program of national service that would "inflame the civic temper," get people thinking about what they owe to their fellow citizens, to their large communities.

You know, the good news is we don't have to inflame the civic temper. It's plenty inflamed now. It has been since 9/11, and even before that, I think. And what we lack is political leadership to challenge people to serve and create the opportunities for them to do it. So all of us who love this enterprise and want to see it grow have got work here now on saving what we've got and then pushing to expand.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. DIONNE: After Kayla speaks, we will ask one potential "bus driver," Les, to respond to Will's question. I particularly love that Dick Armev quote, which we also cite in our piece. Dick Armev says what he thinks. And also what's wrong with aspiring yuppies? Isn't that about upward mobility?

And, in fact, in their piece, Will and Mark have a very nice line. It's a very practical set of suggestions. They say, "Like settlement houses and night school, which helped America absorb waves of immigration, national service opens new paths for upward mobility for young Americans and the people they serve." And they have a lot of suggestions as to how that link can be made.

It is really wonderful to introduce Kayla. Kayla, as you know, is co-editor of the book. She is Senior Research Analyst here at Brookings. We work together on religion and civil society projects. Previously, she served as Public Affairs Associate with the Policy Offices of United Jewish Communities, and she worked in the political section of the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

The only error in the book, as far as I can tell, that we've discovered is that the book lists her as a graduate of New College Oxford. She is a good American and a graduate of New College in Florida. So, now, the record is very clear on that.

This book wouldn't have happened without Kayla, and here I am about to say that about something she was right, and I was wrong. As we were going through putting this book together, Kayla kept pushing and pushing and said, "You know, we should have this point of view here, and particularly new scholarly work."

And I said, "But, Kayla, the book will get too long and should we do this?"

Well, it's a great book because of everything Kayla did. And without Kayla, one of my favorite lines in the book, you know what's coming Kayla, a quotation from Rabbi Chaim of Velotsyn [ph]--how did I do?

MS. DROGOSZ: Good.

MR. DIONNE: --who said, "My neighbor's material needs are my spiritual needs." And that has become one of my slogans ever since Kayla taught it to me.

Kayla, thank you very much.



MS. DROGOSZ: Thank you. And, E.J., I won't be reading from my footnotes, although I know you're disappointed in that, and I encourage all of you to look at them.

MR. DIONNE: Yes, I tried to get her to cut her footnotes, too.

MS. DROGOSZ: There's good stuff in there.

I'm actually going to start by talking about a terrific new book that Theda Skocpol, who is a brilliant social scientist from Harvard has just published. She begins with a description of the gravestone of a fellow long forgotten by history, Warren Durgin, who lived in the rural woodlands of Maine in the mid-1800s. And on his gravestone contains an inscription of a life-defining moment in the 1830s, when Durgin helped place Abraham Lincoln's remains in a tomb. He was a pallbearer.

He served several years in the Union Army during the Civil War and was given this honor because of his service and good soldierly conduct.

Other inscriptions on his tomb suggest just how involved he was in so many strands of American civic life, which were both extraordinary and rather ordinary.

Boldly engraved was a reference to his elected post as head of a post-Civil War association of Union veterans, and another line indicated an affiliation with the Patrons of Husbandry or The Grange, which is a real family fraternity and one of the nation's oldest general farm organizations. And yet another indicates a membership in a leading U.S. fraternal organization, the Order of Odd Fellows.

Now, what's striking to Skocpol and what we would should all note here is how associational affiliations have changed radically. One can understand why Durgin would proclaim for all eternity his service as Lincoln's pallbearer, but Durgin's life is also a part of a civic world that is no longer intuitive and in which associational membership was intensely significant.

Now, as much as I love my work at Brookings and participation on APSA panels and the like, I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have these organizations chiseled on my gravestone. Forgive me, President Talbot, for that one.

Although I'm active in my synagogue, and my alumni associations, and universities, and a dues-paying member of dozens of other organizations, and have worked on political campaigns, I'm not certain those things would make it on my gravestone either.

Organizations like The Grange and The Odd Fellows, to which Durgin belonged, were some of the largest, most encompassing voluntary membership associations in our nation's history. They were launched by civic organizers who took inspiration from America's federally organized polity. They built organizations modeled after the U.S. Government and other institutions with federations and local chapters that linked to state and national entities.

What is distinct about these local chapters, and this turns out really to be a key here, is that they all practice cross-class fellowship, that they had the power to influence the democratic republic of which they were profoundly a part.

Their actions were self-sacrificing, to borrow the words of President Bush, and they knew in their bones that a culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility really could strengthen our country.

Of course, this is because their actions were self-sacrificing, but they were also profoundly self-interested in this kind of political citizenship that has fallen out of vogue these days, and I think that we should try and recover this. For folks like Durgin, who were concerned about the benefit for war veterans, about concerns particular to rural farmers, and about the general economic welfare of themselves and neighbors, this is part of strong citizenship.

The ideas of fostering national service and strengthening the mediating institutions of civil society seem contradictory in their respective emphasis on the local, at the expense of linking this with national groups and national aspirations.

But both the local and the national are part of the quest for what Michael Sandel has called the new public philosophy, one he hopes will resurrect a vision of civic republicanism. This tradition, Sandel says, and I quote, "reminds us that the politics is not only about the size and distribution of the national product, it is also about bringing economic power to democratic account and equipping men and women with the habits and dispositions that suit them to self-rule."

This view emphasizes not only revitalizing, but also altering political arrangements and economic policies that directly connect to the goal of community building.

Steven Goldsmith, a former mayor of Indianapolis, and I think the current Chair of the Corporation for National Service, and Special Adviser to the White House Faith-Based Initiatives, has come up with a good phrase to talk about this. His phrase is "municipal citizenship."

In his book, "Putting Faith in Neighborhoods," Goldsmith explains how Indianapolis invented a national model for creating vibrant cities by encouraging citizenship and engaging community organizations.

He argues that social pathologies are best confronted by productive partnerships between citizens and public officials. He claims that community engagement, for its own sake, may well miss the point if it focuses, as Nisbet has said, only on our psychological gratifications, without recognizing the crucial need for these associations to have a direct and immediate influence on government institutions.

The implications of Goldsmith's argument are bold, and his experience in politics runs deep. When localized civic engagement encourages only bonding social capital, and those are things that strengthen social solidarity within a group, then it fails in its public purpose.

If, however, it reinforces the ties between groups that may have different motivations but a common purpose, it can create a workable partnership with public agencies and strengthen what he calls municipal citizenship. Now, others before him describe the importance of self-governance and personal responsibility, but he also insists that public agencies must create responsive partnerships in which each member is stronger as a result of the partnership.

"It is a challenge," he writes, "to involve citizens in a way that mediates between differing views and results and effective and practical solutions. Especially if indigenous participation is to be real, it must not be window dressing."

So who can be against the idea of creating municipal citizens like the ones we create through AmeriCorps and dozens and dozens of other national service programs?

Municipal citizens work to develop habits of democracy, strengthen civic virtues, and cultivate personal responsibility. They are oriented to solution-focused thinking and open to broader civic obligations beyond their own personal interest.

Goldsmith recognizes that many groups have a stake in the way government does its business and that these groups have different motivations, but nevertheless he remains committed to the idea that citizens and public officials are mutually obligated to foster arrangements that leave both parties better off for their engagement with one another.

So some others in our book have argued that "we cannot strengthen the ties that bind us as a nation unless our civic duty is fostered by bridging social capital, which creates links across groups. This is the strength we have and the weak ties that stretch across lines of race, and class, and religion, since these weak ties allow us to recognize our dependence on one another, so we can become more than just communities of strangers."

Now, one more fellow in this debate, Bob Putnam, in his book, "Democracies in Flux," examined the condition of social capital in several countries.

The trends, he finds, are toward narrow forms of social participation and mounting discontent over political institutions. Yet, he also finds evidence that the welfare state and big government have sustained, rather than eroded, social capital. Why?

Putnam's most striking observation is that unequal distribution of social capital remains a major problem. This unequal distribution appears strongly connected to the shrinking membership and political power of traditional large membership organizations such as unions and others that once organized the working class and others within different classes.

With the breakdown of these institutions, the welfare state is often the only remaining force fostering even a modicum of social equality. Unless the decline of the American political institutions are reversed, our problem, our conflicts, will not be adequately addressed no matter how many bird-watching groups and church picnics we can attend. Self-government is not just a social venture; it's a political adventure.

That said, all of Bill Galston's surveys, and many others, have shown that service initiatives and service learning requirements, like the one I was required to do in high school, have been absolutely transformative, and I'm a case in point, again.

So, if we'd like to try and turn these invisible citizens into visible, active voters and civic entrepreneurs, then we must strengthen national service programs and really consider what it means to foster municipal citizenship, and I'm thankful for all of our panelists, and all of the contributors on the book, who are model municipal citizens themselves, and I hope we can give them a round of applause.

[Applause.]

MR. DIONNE: Thank you, Kayla.

Kayla and I share an affection for Mike Sandel, who also once said, "When politics goes well, we can know a good in common that we cannot know alone," which I think is always worth contemplating.

I want to give Les a chance to reply to some of Will's questions, give the audience a chance to come in.

How much time do we have? We were scheduled until 3:30, Kayla?

MS. DROGOSZ: Till 4:00.

MR. DIONNE: Till 4:00, okay, great..

Go ahead, Les.

MR. LENKOWSKY: Yes. I asked Will what of his questions he'd like me to respond to, and he said, "who's running the bus?" And that, in some ways, is the most interesting one to respond to.

I've got about two weeks left in harness, and as my little exercise at rhetorical questioning with the Wall Street Journal suggests, I'm already getting back into academic mode, and so it's really a fascinating question, as I think as a professor would think about what two years heading an agency in Washington tells me about the way we run this country.

And it ties into something as well that Jane said. To keep it short, I think, public service --public service in government--has become far more difficult in the 10 years that I've been away from Washington than I remember. Maybe I'm being a little nostalgic, but I don't think so.

And to answer the question Jane poses of trying to explain to young people why they should get involved not just in community service, but government, becomes harder as well. Because one of the things we also see from those polls is that young people over and over again say the easiest way, the best way to make a difference on problems that really matter is through community service, rather than getting involved in political office.

And you know there seemed, to me, some tentative--I want to emphasize tentative, since I'm a professor or soon will be again--truths to that.

For example, Will said, "Who's running the store?" Well, on two occasions now, President Bush has proposed an extraordinary increase during difficult budget weather in the size of AmeriCorps. I forget the number offhand, not only AmeriCorps, but all of the programs of the Corporation for National and Community Service, which includes Senior Corps and Learn and Serve.

And if memory serves me well, you know, we're talking about 40-percent increases each year, plus numerous times he's been involved with the program. Frankly, if you asked me what was the biggest surprise I've had in coming to Washington is, in fact, it would be the amount of contact I've had with the President because this has been such an important part of what he regards as his legacy. So he has certainly been trying to drive the bus.

Then, you look at the so-called ideologues in the House of Representatives. Well, last year at this time we were all applauding because those very same ideologues had just passed, by voice vote almost unanimously, the Citizen Service Act. It had gone through the House Education and Workforce Committee to, I think, the surprise of a lot of people.

And while it wasn't everything we wanted or everything other people may have wanted, it was a pretty good set of reforms that make a mark toward some of the changes that, as I suggested earlier, are long overdue in this program, a key element of which emphasizes performance accountability, and that moved forward only to reach an impasse toward the end of the session.

Well, we are capable of making strides in government, but for some reason, and I'm not completely sure why, we can't bring it all the way. Now, I will say that, as the head of this agency, I haven't had much time to pay attention to less-important issues like tax cuts or the war in Iraq, so I can't really generalize to other issues, but my sense, just from casually reading the papers, is that our ability to reach political consensus and move on virtually any issue of importance, including our issue of importance, and it is, to the President, one of the three or four major issues of his administration is that it's much less than it used to be.

So the answer to the question you asked, Will, "Who's running the bus?" a lot has to do with how we are governing ourselves, and I was interested in what Kayla said about the decline of political institutions. Because in some significant ways, and again I apologize, with two weeks left in office, for sounding more like a professor than I ought to be at this point, I think there are some issues related to our political institutions, whether they affect this particular program or other programs, that trouble me a great deal, having spent two years here, and which I hope to think about.

I am hoping to pull together a book. The working title comes from a word I've used, a phrase I've used frequently in my speeches, and anybody with a year's fellowship to offer can see me later--
[Laughter.]

MR. LENKOWSKY: It's called, "A Nation Worth Serving?" Because Jane is absolutely right, that we've seen, after 9/11, and it certainly contributed to the problems we've had this year, an enormous desire on the part of young people to serve.

And yet, at the same time, there are roadblocks that are built in as a result of the nature of our political institutions, our ability to deal with a program like AmeriCorps and overcome--I mean, E.J. Dionne summarized the problem better than anyone I've seen when, in a little phrase, he said, "What was an accounting problem turned into a debacle."

We had an accounting problem. It was a serious accounting problem. There were a couple other problems as well. We could have fixed them. We, in fact, did have ways of fixing them, but instead it's turned into a debacle, and to me that's the big question.

What is it about our political institution, not only who's running the bus, because lots of people try to run the bus, lots of people have a good claim to run the bus, but why is it that when we get issues that we can fix, we seem to have such great difficulty fixing them?

MR. DIONNE: Thank you.

I want to bring in anybody now who wants to join the discussion, also anybody who can bring up Les's spirits, that would be welcome, because this has been a rough--

In the back of the room?

PARTICIPANT: Well, maybe some words of appreciation for Les. It's interesting, listening to the panel here talk about three distinct components of a healthy civil society, talking about voting, talking about volunteerism, and talking about sort of a deeper civic association.

I appreciate, Les, what you've done in the last year to make distinct investments in at least two of those three areas, because if we don't nurture each of them independently, frankly, it's going to fall to the lowest common denominator. You've done that, and I appreciate it, and I think many people in this room do.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Anybody want to dispute that about, Les?

MR. LENKOWSKY: And my spirits aren't that low, by the way, so don't worry about that.

MR. DIONNE: I'm just worried about you.

This gentleman.

MR. KAPLAN: My name is Mortimer Kaplan. I'm an ex-government official. I'm closely tied to the University of Virginia Law School Public Service Center, and we're trying to develop the spirit among graduating lawyers to get involved, and we try to help them, et cetera, et cetera.

At first I say to Jane Eisner, I think talking about voting as being one of the hallmarks of good citizenship is very important, and I commend you on that.

I would also like to suggest, however, that there's another part of being a citizen. There's an obligation to help support our government. I mean the defense rolls or the services we want, it gets down to paying your fair, proper taxes, and we have a real problem today.

I also want to raise the point of whether not your conception of public service involves a centralized bureau of one sort or whether you want to assist what's going on, on the field. We have a very successful program going down in Charlottesville on this Public Service Center, but we have a need for help. And whether or not you envisage helping the organization, students graduate with tremendous indebtedness, loans, and they need

help. We have loan forgiveness programs. We have things of that sort. But the federal government isn't pitching in very much on that, is it?

MR. LENKOWSKY: Well, we do have, among the AmeriCorps programs some programs that bring recent law school graduates in who are committed to do some pro bono work. So they can join AmeriCorps, too. A lot depends on the way the programs are set up.

MR. DIONNE: I want to say something about that, but before I do, I want to remind everybody we are having a reception afterward, and I may shut down the formal part of the program a little bit earlier so that we can all speak informally at the reception, if it's possible, Christina, to get the reception started a little bit earlier. Great.

I just want to say something on this issue of decentralized versus centralized. I mean, AmeriCorps is a deeply decentralized program. Indeed, you can argue that some of those accounting or financial problems happened, in part, because so much of this goes through states and then down to local organizations. So it's specifically not like the Peace Corps, where, at any given moment, the Peace Corps knows how many people sign up with this one organization. Again, Les, you can correct me if I'm wrong about that.

That is, in principle, one of AmeriCorps' great strengths because it's about strengthening, you know, Kayla used the term, "social capital." It's about strengthening all sorts of civic groups at the grassroots, and that has had another effect, which is, in this crisis, you've seen a lot of those groups rise up to try to defend the program, and so it's developed a constituency of sorts.

The problem is that, precisely because it is so decentralized, I think it has less of clear standing in people's minds. There isn't an AmeriCorps office in every town or every state capital in the same way. There may be a little bureau that a governor uses to determine how he's going to give out the money, and that makes it quite different from some of the "New Deal" kind of volunteer programs like the CCC.

I think, you know, Les putting on his professor's hat -- and I loved Will's comment on this issue of centralization versus decentralization -- you know, it's a fascinating political question as to whether AmeriCorps is more vulnerable politically because of this structure or, in the long term, less vulnerable. I'm curious if anybody wants to jump in on that.

MS. EISNER: I'd also like to add I've covered the AmeriCorps story pretty closely for many years, and particularly in the last couple of months have written a great deal about it, and I appreciate the delicateness with which Les dealt with the question of who's driving the bus.

I mean, to me it's pretty obvious, and it's the guy in the White House, and it wouldn't take very much for his intentions to be clear to his fellow Republicans in the House, if that is, in fact, what he wants.

But I think there's another issue and, in fact, it relates to my concern about voting. There's obviously not a damaging political cost to just about killing this program, and I find that very distressing. I too have been made aware of the enormous grassroots response to this.

I mean, I wrote five columns about AmeriCorps in about a month and a half, and that's unusual for me to focus on one subject so thoroughly. But the reason I did is, in part, because it was happening so quickly, but also because I kept on getting phone calls from people--from some young Asian-American woman who just graduated a terrific university and was putting off going to do her Ph.D. program because she was going to do Teach for America, but now she was afraid her education grant was going to come through;

A parent who was a little concerned about her son doing this Conservation Corps and being out in the woods for a year, but now is so proud of him--just constantly hearing from people, not just young people, from older people; not just Democrats and liberals, from conservatives and Republicans; from all sorts of folks who were very much affected by this, never mind the agencies that were going to lose this incredible talent.

And yet, unless that is translated into some sort of political penalty for the people in charge, this is going to happen without any cost. And so I think there has to be some kind of link for the support that this program has in its decentralized way to those who are making the decisions about its financial future.

MR. LENKOWSKY: I want to come back to E.J.'s point about models for a minute, but I do want to observe, I mean, you know, I can't tell what leads somebody to calculate to cast a vote. I do think it's instructive, though, that for the first time in many years, the HUD VA Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee did put in a significant amount of money for AmeriCorps for 2004.

You know, that hasn't happened--we're not quite sure whether it was '97 or '95, whether that was the last time that happened, at least my folks haven't told me what number that is--but I'm sure that reflects, whether it's a fear of penalty or the other side of that, which I would hope is the case, a recognition of the good things that are being done in those communities. We've seen a change in 2004.

Now, would it have been nicer, would it have made it a little easier for my job if that had occurred early in 2003 or maybe late in 2002, when Congress was considering President Bush's request for a sum of money that would have enabled us to enroll 75,000 AmeriCorps members? Yeah, that would have been a lot nicer.

But the fact of the matter is we are seeing progress, and one of the most difficult things for free people anywhere to do is to notice that when you make progress, it deserves some praise. It's one of the hardest things to teach the free people to praise.

We are making some progress, and among those sorts of progress we also do need to explore different kinds of models for AmeriCorps. I don't want to go into a lot of detail on this. Many of you know I am associated with a so-called individualized model that would expand the number of AmeriCorps members. It would have a price on the bridging social capital. That's one of the prices we've got to balance against other things.

So I think, if we do want to really make national service something that many more young people especially experience in their lifetimes, doing it exclusively the way we're currently doing it may not be the only way we want to look at, but we need to weigh the costs and benefits of any such model very carefully.

MR. DIONNE: Will?

MR. MARSHALL: Yes, we've always said that we don't want to regard national service as just another government program. We want to regard it as a civic enterprise or, as Barbara Mikulski likes to say, a social invention like night school that grows from the community up.

And this is a very decentralized program, and it doesn't have the same kind of character of other Washington programs, where you have claimants or clients who are highly organized and vocal when their oxen are being gored in Congress. And that's the great glory of it.

I mean, the national service community, the people who are running the programs around the country, have had a hard time trying to figure out how to respond to this meltdown in Washington because precisely they don't want to come in here, you know, like a group of aggrieved and entitled people, and they were hoping and staying quiet for the longest time, but when it becomes clear, when you get the news that your programs are going to be cut, you've got to do something.

And here again they're trying not to be very political, but they've got to speak for the communities that are really going to suffer when these cuts go through and nothing is happening in Congress, and it's great that we've got more money in the 2004 appropriations, but that's not going to do us any good or prevent this kind of severe reduction in the infrastructure that we've patiently built up over the years.

So it's true that the nature of the program is such that it doesn't, so that there's kind of a feedback disruption from the programs to members of Congress which, to me, is again the glory and the promise of the program, but it hurts it in the short term.

But I also should say, frankly, that the House of Representatives, in addition to being an ideological hothouse, is a lagging indicator of social change, thanks to redistricting and other pathologies of the American political system.

And what Les has said is right. The public support, political support, grassroots is growing and is growing among Republican mayors, governors and even legislatures. So I don't have any--I'm confident about the long-term picture, but, boy, we can do a lot of damage here in the short term if we don't confront the people who are trying to, frankly, sabotage this thing.

MR. DIONNE: Kayla, did you want to--

MS. DROGOSZ: Yes. Les, I know I'm bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Both have their place. And one question I have for you, and I'm asking because I want your wise counsel on this, is that those in the service movement now, how should they be organizing their efforts, given the state of affairs out here?

We can write our members of Congress, we can write all of the op-eds we possibly can until we're blue in the face, but should we actually work for mandatory service learning requirements in high schools, for example? Should we--there's got to be something more here.

MR. LENKOWSKY: It sounds to me like it's the kind of question I have to wait until August 16th to answer--

MS. DROGOSZ: I'm calling you August 17th.

MR. LENKOWSKY: --when I am a free man again.

[Laughter.]

MR. LENKOWSKY: I will just tell you what I have been saying constantly for two years to all of our grantees and would-be grantees. There are some fantastic programs out there. They're wonderful things. I've been very privileged to see them.

And on your point, Will, you know, you lie awake late at night trying to figure out what else you can do when you go through this sort of period, and I've been doing that since November, and one of the things is not, "Can I save my skin?" because I can always go teach somewhere. My mentor, Pat Moynihan, used to say, "The nice thing about having a Harvard Ph.D. is there's always a community college that will employ you."

[Laughter.]

MR. LENKOWSKY: And that's true. But it's really, as I think about the stories I read about those grantees and the shortfalls that many of them may experience this year, through no fault of their own, as a result of problems that have been developing for over

a decade and the necessity I had, as the CEO, to face up to those problems--our press people like to refer to what we've been going through as "The Perfect Storm." And I happen to be on deck.

Now, my son tells me George Clooney played the role of the captain in "The Perfect Storm," so please do not take this analogy too far.

[Laughter.]

MR. LENKOWSKY: But, you know, we just had to do it. I mean, the alternative, trust me, would have been worse, if we didn't bite the bullet right now and do the things we have to do. But I am perfectly well aware--I have my own students who are going into programs like Teach for America-- that these are real hardships. This is not some faceless thing that we're trying to deal with, and anything we can do, my own advice is just keep telling the good stories.

Ultimately, and I think this gets to Jane's point, too, you have to have faith in the common sense of our elected officials. And again I have a lot more faith in the House of Representatives I think than you, Will. I think I have met with a lot of people there who are very skeptical about the premise in AmeriCorps, but they are also planted firmly on the ground and willing to look at the facts. And as long as those facts keep being told, hopefully, we will get the kind of support the program needs, whether this year or in the long run or both.

MR. DIONNE: Gene, do you want to come in and Hattie Babbitt? President Babbitt.

[Laughter.]

MR. SOFER: My name is Gene Sofer, and I helped to write the AmeriCorps legislation in 1993, and I'm involved in the Coalition to Save AmeriCorps today, which makes me some kind of idiot savant, I think, but I would make a few points.

One, I think AmeriCorps is much too decentralized, and that has contributed to some of the problems. And, ironically, the Citizen Service Act which you referred to, Les, would exacerbate that problem and make it even more decentralized. It seems to me that the reauthorization that is pending goes in precisely the opposite direction from the direction that everyone needs to, number one.

Number two, I think it's also worth pointing out that in spite of the crisis that confronts AmeriCorps now, the reauthorization has stalled over an issue which is, by and large, peripheral, and that's the Section 175, and that goes to--

MR. LENKOWSKY: Which is, just to explain--

MR. SOFER: It's a religious preference issue which says that if you're a religious organization, you can hire, under AmeriCorps you can't hire someone of your religious

preference with AmeriCorps money. I think that's basically it, which is, by and large, an irrelevancy to the substance of AmeriCorps and even to the inclusion of faith-based organizations in AmeriCorps.

And, third, I think that the field is now learning something that it didn't really know, which maybe Jane's columns helped to produce, which is that over the last 10 years, AmeriCorps really has become imbedded in the fabric of thousands of communities across the country and really does make, does reflect the claims that we have been making for it.

And the last point I would make is I think that the field got soft because we knew, between 1994 and 2002, that when push came to shove Bill Clinton would save the program. And I think the field didn't organize because it relied on the President to protect his legacy. And we're now, I think to one degree or another, paying that price, but learning very fast.

MR. DIONNE: Those are excellent points. Thank you.

Can we bring in some more voices, and then Hattie Babbitt, and then, Mark, if you want to come back in.

MS. BABBITT: Well, I have a non-AmeriCorps question if that's all right.

MR. DIONNE: Yes.

MS. BABBITT: Kayla talked about civic engagement failing in public purpose if it does not engage governments and about the need to influence public officials and how they do business.

And Jane said that when 18-year-olds got the right to vote, they did not do what other groups who had been enfranchised did, which was seize that right and build on that right.

I got the data, but what I didn't understand, from any of you all, is why is it that there has been this shift to non--to civic engagement which is volunteerism not engaging governments, not voting? What has caused this very important shift in the way Americans conduct their lives as citizens?

MS. EISNER: Well, it's a huge issue. I'll try to just answer, briefly, for what I know, and I won't pretend to be an expert on this.

Clearly, the decline in voting among young people mirrors, to a large degree, the decline in voting among everyone. We now have a generation of young people, half of whose parents don't vote. So part of what is affecting them is affecting everyone.

We also know from voting statistics that young people, whether or not they're 18 or 21 or whatever the minimum age is, tend to vote at lower rates than older people do. It makes sense. You're moving around a lot. You don't have the same kind of stake in the community. You might not care what the local zoning commission is doing or even the governor is doing. So some of it just has to do with long term ways of being young and not engaging on that level.

But I think that there are other things going on. I mean, I think that clearly we have seen a decline. There are several factors that are happening at once. You've got a decline in trust in government, you've got a decline in voting, you've got a decline in reading newspapers.

I won't pretend to say that they're all connected or that there's a cause and effect, but certainly the fact that they're all happening together, as well as other rates or changes in civic engagement affect that.

And I think that this idea that it's associational, rather than driven by issues or causes or candidates is really important because I think that that both explains the decline for young people, but gives us hope for reversing because they are absorbing a message, and the message is politicians are not, they're not connected to me. What's happening in government isn't relevant to my life. If I care about things, I'll go volunteer in the school myself. I'll see results much more quickly. Politics and governance is messy. It takes a long time. Sometimes you've got to make compromises, but also they don't touch it. They don't see it.

If I may, just a very brief personal example in this, my aforementioned oldest child, who sort of had to be dragged to the polls the first time and, sad to say, did not bother to place an absentee ballot when she was in college, had a change this past spring, and that's because my sister is running for local office. And while as a journalist, I can't get involved in her campaign, she enlisted my daughter to actually sit at the polls from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. This was a big feat for a 19-year-old to get up that early. For her aunt, she did this.

But, my goodness, seeing local politics firsthand, she was so enthused, not that she's going to go out and run for office herself, but just that she understood it, and she saw how relevant it was to people's lives.

And I think, you know, it's a fuzzy idea, and I hope to have it sharper, but I think what's missing is that young people don't touch politics. It's not real to them. And the farther and father away we go from it all, whether it's asking them to vote, seeing the politicians, seeing the results of what government does, the more disenchanted they get. And somehow we've got to bring it closer. We've got to get it so they can touch it.

MR. DIONNE: I want to bring in Les and also Kayla on this question. I just want to make a quick comment.

A fact of life, young people will always vote at somewhat lower rates than people once they've had children, settle in a community, because young people are more mobile and the like. The issue is where you've gone over this period of time where you've had, it's close to 50 percent, right, in 1972, if I remember?

MS. EISNER: Yes.

MR. DIONNE: You know, down to the--

MS. EISNER: About 33 percent in 2000.

MR. DIONNE: So the climb up was from 50-percent higher. Now, it starts down here at 30 percent. And I think some of this goes to Les's point about praise and what do we praise in the society.

And when you think of what words do we use about government, we use words like political hacks and bureaucrats. When we talk about service, on the other hand, we talk about good citizens. We talk about we use all sorts of other language. So I think there is a sense of just what does society praise?

And my friend and colleague, Paul Light, here at Brookings, has shown that a lot of young people, given a choice between going into government or going into the not-for-profit sector, are tending to just choose the not-for-profit sector.

Secondly, I always like to say that politics is the only profession that spends about a billion dollars advertising against itself. If you look at the campaigns, I mean, imagine if doctors said that about each other or lawyers. So I think that is a piece of this.

Lastly, on Jane's point about I've thought that we talk about compulsory service in the schools, there are some school districts that have tried making working on some sort of political campaign, whether a personal campaign or a referendum campaign as part of the civics curriculum, and that was just what kids did.

And I can imagine, in some school districts, you could get into a lot of trouble if all of the students organized to throw a particular school board member out, but, boy, that would be experiencing power, as Harry Boyt talked about it.

But I've wondered: I think that in addition to emphasizing the value of service, we do need to emphasize, in civic education and through experience, the value of actual political participation. Because an awful lot of people, just like Jane's daughter, once they touch campaigns, it usually stays part of them. And I'll close by saying it really helped her experience that Jane's sister won by a landslide.

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: Les?

MR. LENKOWSKY: If I can just add to those because it's something we did in this administration, and I'm very proud to have been associated with it -- the President took the leadership on it -- which is to reemphasize the teaching of civics and history in the curriculum of elementary, secondary schools and colleges.

All of these polls, they're all sort of variations of Jay Leno's walk around Hollywood and Vine, but some are better than others. But the numbers you see, whether it's the National Assessment of Educational Progress or others, are really worrying.

The one I like to cite a lot is a poll done under the auspices of the Roper Center that showed that 20 percent of the students at elite colleges and universities know where the words "Of the people, by the people and for the people" come from. I don't want to pretend I've looked at the basic numbers of the poll. I'm just citing the top line number.

Now, it seem to me if we're interested in getting people more involved in our government, the notion that our government ought to be, and is, a government of the people, by the people and for the people ought to be pretty important to know.

I actually had a Deputy Director, one of the things we wanted to do in AmeriCorps, and I probably won't have the time to do, is to make sure, as part of the service in AmeriCorps, our members all get a small set of readings of classic American documents. You can't go too far before you get in a controversy. But I think we would all agree that things like the Constitution, the Declaration, the Gettysburg Address and so forth, ought to be in that booklet.

And I was talking to one of our state commissions one day about this, and the Deputy Director of the commission took exception to the Gettysburg Address for inclusion in this list.

And I said, you know, you're out there working with groups that are trying to deal with community problems, and just imagine how much more effective those groups would be if at an appropriate point when leadership of the group is being told, "Ah, leave it to us. This is not your problem."

Somebody could say, "But, you know, Abraham Lincoln said that we have a government of the people, by the people, for the people, and so it is our problem."

Well, at that level, just what our young people actually learn in school, apart from the service, and there's a wonderful Circle Report, I believe this year, I forget--is Deborah still back there somewhere--who sponsored this, but emphasized you have to link civic service to civic and historical knowledge to produce civic engagement.

MR. DIONNE: Kayla?

MS. DROGOSZ: One thing that I would add to that is I think civic education is a strong component of this, but the single answer I can give you is that there is no personal sense of efficacy by voting in young people, and there's lots of young folks in this room who are clearly devoted to the subject and are passionate about service, and conceptions really have changed.

Paul Light and Judy Labiner have done some great surveys that are really startling, and I don't know how to begin to redefine these things. I think, out of 2,000 people they surveyed, and you'll have to check these things, not one person thought of public service as running for elected office anywhere, on campus, a city, anywhere; that mostly there was a profound connection with nonprofit activities, like rarely government service either.

And this I experienced as a public administrator going to the program as a graduate student that's supposed to train civil servants, and they went to the private sector straight away and never intended to go into public service.

So there's a great sense of disaffection, and personal efficacy comes with service or nonprofits and not with voting. So I'm trying to reverse those trends, too, and I'm deeply sympathetic to these positions, but it comes down to efficacy.

MS. BABBITT: I want to let Will end with the grand, wise statement that I know he'll cap this off with, so that's why I'm hornin' in here.

MR. DIONNE: I love to see Will put on the spot like that. He looks kind of like a New South Senator.

[Laughter.]

MS. BABBITT: Just one more thing about the efficacy point. It sounds like the "Arizona Show" today, but there's a program that started in Arizona called Kids Vote, which is a program where parents take their children to the polls, 2-year-olds, 4-year-olds, 6-year-olds. We would take our kids to the polls, and you associate going to the polls with some family ritual. You all go out for pancakes afterwards. It's not efficacy. It's like Thanksgiving. It's part of living and breathing in the soup of the United States of America.

If our task today is to convince another 30 million voters that it's efficient, wow. But if we can somehow make it a more emotional commitment, much more of a tradition, rather than--because if we try to march one-by-one up the efficacy ladder, it's a pretty steep ladder.

MR. DIONNE: Could we bring in--

MR. MARSHALL: Could I just--

MR. DIONNE: Yes, as long as it's as good as Hattie promised.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I don't know about that, but, look, I think your question is related to national service, and I want to try to do that.

It seems to me the short answer for this generational shift is mistrust of government. E.J. said we don't praise government, that's true, but I think young people have made a probably pretty canny judgment about the efficacy of big government institutions as the venue for their social activism and idealism.

My generation, the boomers thought that you went into government if you wanted to effect social change. The "Xers" and "Yers" think it is the civic and social sector. When I go to a policy school like Kennedy or Harris at Chicago and ask for a show of hands who wants to go into government, nobody wants to go into government, they want to go into the social sector.

I don't think this is a problem. This is a good thing to me. What it suggests to me is that people want to take immediate control. They want to show civic agency, they want to show that they can take hold of a public problem and work on it themselves and not delegate that to people, frankly, remote authorities that they don't trust very well and who they think are more responsive to organized special interests than to them.

So, to me, this is not a problem, it's an opportunity, but the connection to national service is this. I don't think we should spend any time trying to rebuild their allegiance to voting for the big government delivery system because they don't have any confidence in it.

But what they I think could have confidence in is a new model of public activism that is decentralized, that calls on citizens to play a larger role in producing the public goods that they want and not delegating that responsibility to far-off technocrats and, yes, bureaucrats.

And I think that national service is an example of a new hybrid of public and private activism aimed at solving public problems that carves out a much bigger role for citizens to solve local problems.

So that is a form of governance that I think young people are intuitively and powerfully drawn to, and that's why, it seems to me, you want to expand national service because it is not just a program, it is an alternative to the old top-down and centralizing ways of solving public problems that they don't have much confidence in.

MR. DIONNE: I want to bring, I want some voices before we close, I can't resist saying something in response to that.

Very briefly, I agree with you to the extent that strengthening the civic sector is a social good. It's good for everything. I think it is a problem, though, if government is viewed as the way you just described it as unresponsive, bureaucratic, top down.

I mean, we don't have a Soviet government in this country; we have a democratic government. And I think it's very disturbing that people automatically associate government with those other negatives.

I mean, when people went into the government under FDR or Ike or JFK, they didn't view themselves as becoming bureaucrats. They viewed themselves as becoming civil rights lawyers in the Justice Department or doing something in the military or actually solving problems by choosing to go into government.

I think it's distressing to have the assumption on the table be that government does equal top down, equal bureaucratic, equal ineffectual. It doesn't mean that there isn't some truth to some of the critique at times, but that is not our tradition as a country, I think.

MR. MARSHALL: I think I'm describing young people's attitudes accurately, but I could be wrong about that.

MR. DIONNE: Let's bring in everybody who wants to get in, and then we'll close it down with eloquent comments from--

PARTICIPANT: Let's hear from a young person.

MR. DIONNE: There you go.

PARTICIPANT: I guess I'm the token young person.

MR. DIONNE: There are a lot of young people in the room.

PARTICIPANT: My name is Molly, and I just wanted to speak to this kind of debate between hands-on community service and policy.

When I graduated from college, I went into a volunteer program that was funded by AmeriCorps and spent a year working hands on with the community, and in college I spent a lot of time overseas working hands on. And that drove me to realize how important policy is.

And I currently work across the street at a think tank--

[Tape change: T-1B to T-2A.]

PARTICIPANT: --organizations that work the hands on, if we really are concerned with public service and the importance of policy, to take advantage of the fact that so many

people are demonstrating their civic-mindedness through service to show the link to policy.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you for that comment.

The gentleman over here, Charlie Cobb, and the gentleman over there.

MR. KOZE: Hi, I'm Christopher Koze [ph.] I guess I'd put myself as part of the 21-or-under club. So I just have a slight comment--

MR. DIONNE: We're jealous.

MR. KOZE: --and possibly a comment and possibly you can answer based on the idea I have.

Myself, at the age of 15, I came to my City Council and proposed an idea that I, too, saw myself, which a lot of the critics and the examples that we brought out about the problems of the political system is that it's ineffective, and it's discontent to those who are supposed to serve.

And one of the ideas I had brought to my City Council members was to actually open up the City Council to the young people, as in have a "Youth Advisory Council" or have a couple seats on the Youth Council where a couple youth of the community actually sit on it and actually learn about how the City Council actually works and actually serve as the issue arose, to actually bring change.

And I use the quote as in using service and marrying that to public politics, as in, as a young person, I even say over 50 percent of young Americans participate in community service. If we can marry that with politics, even at the lowest level, which we all could say it's a local level, that, not only as the young lady brought out, as you get into community service, you get more engaged.

But if you can get people under the age of 18, who are not able to vote yet -- under the age of 15 -- get involved, I think, personally, that for myself, who has been involved in so many organizations now that it's mind-boggling to myself, but that in itself is where we should be trying to go, not just to say, okay, we're trying to strengthen the national service as in AmeriCorps, but also marry the two together, even at the lowest points at the local community.

So I just wanted to know what your thoughts were on that and if you support or not, so just a comment.

MR. DIONNE: Can we hold off because I want to bring everybody in because we'll never end otherwise.

This gentleman here and Charlie Cobb.

PARTICIPANT: Amen to your comments. That was one of the things I wanted to bring up. I'm from Youth Service America and one of the key things we work on is Youth Voice. And somebody up on the panel said something about young people being the future. They're not our future. They're our present, and they need to be equally as engaged in our communities as any adult is.

And how do we expect a young person, when they turn 18, to automatically know how to be civically engaged? We can't flip on a switch when you turn 18. Young people have to be engaged at younger ages. They need to be a part of our City Council's. They need to be on boards of directors of community organizations. They need to be a part of our community foundations as philanthropists. Those are the kinds of things we're working on at Youth Service America and developing strategies for those things.

I can also say, as a 32-year-old male, I was involved, in my younger years in politics out in California in the state legislature during the Willy Brown years, and I was turned off to politics after working and doing politics for about five years there. It was in part because the whole process is intimidating, it's overwhelming.

The traditions, the legislative institutional traditions that are established, the process that young members of the House of Representatives or in the Senate have to go through in order to become leaders within those institutions is crazy. So there are not opportunities for young people to be leaders.

And then also I think you said, Jane, that there was a spike in 1992 of young people voting. It was in part because Clinton did things to appeal to young people. He went on MTV and talked about whether or not he wore boxers or briefs. He went on the "Arsenio Hall Show" and played a saxophone. He did things to appeal to young people. Stuff is simple to figure out here.

MR. DIONNE: I hope our future doesn't lie in boxers or briefs.

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: Charlie Cobb?

MR. COBB: I raised my hand to speak specifically and really raise a question specifically about the question of young people and voting because I think the problem is simpler than you make out.

It seems to me that, one, really in this country we have a kind of "no party" politics, except in election years. So, if you're talking about young people engaged in the political process, there's no political parties, really, for them to engage with on a day-to-day basis.

For instance, when I was in high school many years ago, I went to high school in Massachusetts, and when John Kennedy campaigned for President in 1960, the political machine shut down the schools, and we had to all go out and watch him make his speech. There was--

MR. DIONNE: That's effective.

MR. COBB: I'm not making an argument for machine politics; I'm really trying to make the point that there's a kind of machinery that has to be there if you want to engage people. So what you've got, it seems to me, looking at my own children, who are 20-something, are kind of the young people in politics are ones who kind of self-select.

I think Bill Clinton is kind of the model of that, of another generation, because he decided to be President as a teenager, and it's not always clear to me why young people, the ones who do self-select, become interested, become engaged do.

But it does seem to me that you don't have any meaningful structures in this country for any kind of access to or sustained engagement with politics. Thus, you get intimidated if you try and break in or you need a bunch of money or you need certain kinds of connections.

MR. DIONNE: Any other comments?

Back there. Two quick ones, and then we will, if our panel can be as brief as possible, because of the time, and I'd like us to end on time, so we'll just be a little over.

Sir?

MR. LOVELL: Hi. I'm Philip Lovell with Campfire USA. It's good to see you, Les. I don't know if you're headed back to IUPUI, but if you are, then, they're lucky to have you.

I want to touch on this comment about youth civic engagement, and I'm glad that this conversation sort of started out with national service. It is now more ending on the whole youth civic engagement because I think that it's really important that we not forget the service components of this national dialogue.

I wanted to raise a point that was mentioned, but I don't think received the emphasis that it really deserves as to why young people aren't as civically engaged, and specifically when you talk about voting.

Voting isn't really an empowerment experience. You go to a booth, you pull the lever, you find out towards the end of the day who won, but your contact with the civic institution of our democracy really it ends there. You might write a letter to a Representative, but will it get read? You might ask for a meeting with a Representative or a Senator, and you might be able to meet with the staff, but maybe not. And so we

need to find ways that we can really connect young people to their civic institutions that are very empowering.

I have three suggestions for this:

One, like my younger colleague suggested, Youth Advisory Councils. I was involved in this stuff in high school, and now I'm an advocate, and maybe even a lobbyist, if we're talking more specifically, and it really empowered me to think, "whoa, maybe I can make a difference." This is what I wanted to do for a career. So Youth Advisory Councils for mayors, for governors for members of Congress, whatever.

Another thing is to have young people sit on boards of directors. It's a great way for youth to have a real handle of how local decision-making can really happen and see an impact locally that's more civically engaged than really volunteering.

And then advocacy organizations who will more specifically target young people to get involved. That's another way that young people can see that, speaking collectively and working collectively, you can make a difference.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you.

And then very briefly in the back, and then I'm going to ask our panelists to confine themselves to about 30 seconds each.

Sir?

MR. ENDRES: Hi, my name is Tom Endres. I'm currently the Director of Civic Engagement with the National Council on Aging, and I just would like to ask the panel if anyone has gone back and looked at, from the early days of the government's involvement in service, what sort of the progression has been of policies related to civic engagement.

Just reflecting back on a couple of experiences I've had, I believe that when service has really been a tool to engage young people and become politically active, there has been a reaction in the establishment of policies and procedures in the various programs of national service that have, in fact, cut that participation off.

So I think there's an issue here about the relationship of service to civic engagement-- what specifically we mean by civic engagement. If we mean by civic engagement, in part, voting, I think that's where, if I recall correctly, all of the wheels stop turning at some point because of the activity of service participants engaged in voters' rights, and civil rights and so forth back in those early years.

So I don't know that anybody has really closely looked at that issue, but I would hope that as we move forward, we do do that, because I think it goes back to Will's point that there are some issues here that I refer to as the recurring nonrecurables. We keep

forgetting about them. And if we start addressing them, we want to get people civically engaged. We want to be more active. We want to encourage voting. But as soon as those activities, in fact, become effective, then the policies and procedures are put in place to prevent that.

So I would just ask the panelists either to comment on that, if they have any information or knowledge about and, if not, just put it on the table as an issue that needs to be looked at.

MR. DIONNE: As the late Paul Wellstone said in a different context, you don't have a lot of time, so talk really fast.

Also, I don't want to lose Gene's point from way back there about the centralization versus decentralization. Some very good ideas put on the table from the floor.

Do you want to start, Kayla, and we'll just move up the line.

MS. DROGOSZ: Well, clearly, there are, I mean this is a room full of inspired individuals, who I hope will inspire others, and I'm sad to see Les will be going. I'm a big fan, and I know he won't stray far from the service movement.

I hope that we can still work to create service learning requirements in high schools, and I think making sure that national service stays around, AmeriCorps gets three times the funding than it's getting now is the direction we need to go in.

And I think we need to make sure that service isn't pitched as an alternative to government, but rather as a bridge to government and politics.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Wow. That was great.

MR. MARSHALL: A lot of great comments. I can't respond to them all, but let me give Les a plug and say that one idea that I liked was the idea of more decentralization through vouchers, which would give individuals the ability to go and sign up with nonprofits, including faith-based ones, under a proper set of guidelines. So I'm a radical decentralist in this.

I'll just close real quickly on this point. Harry Boyt has a wonderful story about a group of kids, skateboarders, who go to their government in one of these wonderful Minnesota towns, highly progressive, everybody above average--

[Laughter.]

MR. MARSHALL: And in the old political style, they demand a skateboard place, right? It's your job to build us something that we want, and that's the old model of the interaction between citizens and governments.

And the enlightened government there said, "forget about it." You come back to me with a plan for how you're going to get what you want and what you're going to do to get it, and then I'll work with you in a partnership to get it done.

That's the new governance model, the promise inherent I think in national service.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you.

MR. LENKOWSKY: Thanks. Just quickly to pick up Gene's point, because I see he's standing right next to Kyle Caldwell, who is the Chairman of the Board of the Association of State Service Commissions.

We can go back and forth on too much decentral--I mean, it's less filling, tastes better kind of thing.

I think, Gene, when you say that we're imbedded in the fabric of communities, you're absolutely right. One of the reasons that's occurred is because of the level of decentralization.

And I can tell you, having had to sit in judgment over grant applications, where the question in front of me was do you give a grant for a project in Michigan to do whatever versus--and it sometimes will come down to that--a grant do, a project, in Minnesota. Frankly, there's no way, other than what comes to me on paper, that I can make that choice.

And to the extent we have good people like Kyle and the staff he's put together in Michigan, and we're getting a lot more of them, I think we need to trust those folks to make those decisions on what's in the community.

The other point I'd like to make, just to pull some of these other questions together, which we haven't talked a lot about, are Senior Corps and Learn and Serve America.

Senior Corps is a wonderful program. Nearly a half-million people are involved with it, and it's facing a major challenge, though you wouldn't think about it.

One of the things we do know from Putnam's research and others is that the volunteering patterns of baby boomers were not those of the generation that preceded them, and yet these boomers are now approaching retirement.

I'm approaching retirement. And unless they step forward and pick up the level of volunteering that we know seniors maintain, which is a very big portion of our volunteer labor force, so to speak, a lot of our organization or community efforts are going to be facing hard times ahead, and so a really energized Senior Corps is going to be very important.

The other one is our Learn and Serve Program, which I've referred to earlier. I believe we're actually making some grants today, although we may not be making those officially. It will be within the next couple of days, and that's a program that does exactly the kind of community-based programming.

The one thing that makes young people good audiences to work with is you know where they're going to be most of the day. They're going to be in schools. They're going to be in after-school programs and so on or the equivalents.

And so to the extent you can come up with innovative programs that help them move up that arena and become empowered, become engaged in the program, you really have a very good leverage point.

The bad news is, even though this is a great passion of Senator Kennedy's, I can tell you it is also a passion of President Bush's that we published last August something called "Students in Service to America," which was a kind of guide to how you could develop student service programs, including the sort we heard discussed. Despite this very bipartisan coalition, the appropriation has never gone up in 10 years for this program. This is a program that could benefit, it's not a very costly program, but it could benefit from a lot of good investment.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you, Les.

Jane?

MS. EISNER: Well, one brief comment which is that, while I'm all in favor of youth engagement, having covered the Philadelphia City Council, I'm not certain that having young people witness how that sausage is being made might be the best introduction to government, but I do appreciate and agree with many of these ideas.

I guess I just want to end with a brief reference to this whole question of making this bridge between service and what I see as voting, which is sort of the very smallest step, but the most important duty and obligation we have as citizens.

They should never be mutually exclusive, but we have to always keep in mind that what service does is bring great enrichment to an individual school or neighborhood or village or park. It helps enormously that specific place.

And we all know, from personal experience and from numerous studies, that it enriches the individual who gives the service, but it does not address the larger problem. That's what government is supposed to do. It does it clumsily, it doesn't do it very well, but government is supposed to address the larger problems.

And so it seems to me that that is really a serious link that we have to impress upon all Americans, but particularly among young people.

Thanks.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much.

I want to thank you all for coming. I want to do two things. I want to thank a number of people, and I want to read one brief passage from Charlie Cobb because it goes to a lot of what people have been saying.

First, I want to thank Strobe Talbot, the President of Brookings, and Carol Graham, the Director of the Governance Studies Program. They were really engaged in this process and very, very encouraging; Bob Faherty and all of the good folks at the Brookings Press; Steve Smith and all of the good people at the Brookings Communications Office; Matt Podolsky, Andy Martin and Christina Counselman. This is I think our last event we're going to be doing together. Christina is going on to new adventures in Trinidad, and she is one of the best people I will ever, ever work with in my life. So thank you, Christina.

And I just want to read from Charlie Cobb because he's talking about the civil rights movement, and he says, "First, the Southern Civil Rights Movement is best understood as a movement of community organizing, rather than protest." He goes on, "The movement is a powerful illustration of how much commitment can compensate for a lack of material resources. Typically, an organizer entered a town or county, working with a handful of local people, built local organizations, freedom schools, political groups like the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in Alabama or labor unions or small enterprises like Mississippi's Poor People's Corporation."

And here's the key. "The point is to understand the community organizers do not lead; instead, they cultivate leadership." And I think that's what we're talking about here.

Thank you all very much and thank you to all of the leaders sitting in this room.

[Whereupon, the proceedings were concluded.]