

**Corporation for National and Community Service**  
**Minutes of the board of Directors Meeting**  
**May 24, 2017**  
**3 p.m. ET**

The Board of Directors for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) convened in Washington, DC on May 24, 2017. The following members were present:

Shamina Singh, the outgoing chair

Victoria Hughes, the new chair

Dean Reuter, vice chair

Mona Dixon

Rick Christman (by telephone)

**Chair's Opening Remarks**

Board chair Shamina Singh called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone joining by phone and those gathered in person at the CNCS headquarters. She welcomed her fellow board members, Vice Chair Dean Reuter and Victoria Hughes, and indicated that Rick Christman was participating by telephone and Eric Liu was unavailable to join the meeting.

Ms. Singh gave a preview of the meeting's agenda. The chair would do a quick summary of the board retreat, and share some exciting news about the board officers, and Acting CEO Kim Mansaray would provide her CEO update. The meeting would then be opened for public comments. Ms. Singh noted that the board had already approved the minutes for the February 2017 board meeting.

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**Report on the Board's Retreat**

The retreat started with a report from Acting CEO Kim Mansaray, who presented material on recent accomplishments by programs, some operational updates, and the great recognition that CNCS programs are getting from elected officials and other stakeholders. The board then discussed its governance. Ms. Singh announced that the board had elected Victoria Hughes as the next chair and herself as the new vice chair, with both positions effective at this meeting. Ms. Singh announced that she would turn over the gavel to Ms. Hughes, the new chair, very shortly. Ms. Singh noted that the passing of the chair position continues a tradition from Administration transitions in 2001 and 2009, and reflects guidance from the White House. The transition is a reminder of the bipartisan nature of the board and of the enterprise of national service.

Ms. Singh thanked the board members and the staff of the agency for working so diligently over the past year and a half while she was board chair. She said that it had been gratifying to have been part of the board, and serve as the chair, when the CNCS received its second highest appropriation in its history and AmeriCorps received its highest appropriation in history. Ms. Singh believes that the budget is evidence of the fact that service does matter and the work that we are all doing is important work. All of it is important to the health, the life, and the economic growth of our country.

Upon the conclusion of her remarks, Shamina Singh turned the board meeting over to the new chair, Victoria Hughes.

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**Remarks by Victoria Hughes, the New Board Chair**

Ms. Hughes thanked Ms. Singh for her service and her leadership over the last year and a half as board chair, Dean Reuter for serving as vice chair, and all of the board members for supporting her in her new role as the chair and for the guidance and leadership that they provide. She noted that one of the special aspects of CNCS is having a bipartisan board of directors nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Ms. Hughes noted that the board is able to discuss policy and operations in an open and free-flowing manner, and that she really appreciates the insights and fellowship of this board, and looks forward to working with everyone on the board.

Ms. Hughes welcomed two new Administration appointees to CNCS. Mark Scraba arrived the week before the board meeting and joined the board at the retreat. Mark is the new Senior Advisor for Wounded Warriors, Veterans, and Military Family Initiatives. He is a retired U.S. Army brigadier general with more than 30 years of high-level experience. Upon transitioning from the military after holding posts both domestically and overseas, Mark immersed himself in philanthropic and nonprofit organizations focusing on military families, wounded warriors, and Gold Star children. Prior to his arrival at CNCS, Mark served on the presidential transition team, and in January 2017, he was appointed a special assistant to the Secretary of Defense.

Effective July 2017, Tim Noelker begins his new role as the General Counsel for CNCS. Tim comes to CNCS after many years of Federal practice at the Thompson Coburn law firm and early career experience at the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C.. Tim has decades of nonprofit leadership service in local and national positions, including with Catholic Charities, USA; the Child Welfare League of America; and the Council on Accreditation, the New York

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nonprofit that regulates international adoption agencies on behalf of the U.S. Department of State.

The chair stated that she was pleased to welcome both of these Administration appointees to the national service family, and looks forward to working with them in the months and years ahead.

Ms. Hughes then thanked Acting CEO Kim Mansaray and the senior team at CNCS, who have taken on additional responsibilities during the transition. She noted that this is a very experienced group of career officials who are keeping the operation of the agency running smoothly. She said that her appreciation goes to all of the CNCS staff at headquarters, on the NCCC campuses, and in the state offices around the country. She thanked all of the employees for their continued focus, commitment, and professionalism. Lastly, Ms. Hughes recognized the extraordinary network of partners who make national service and social innovation happen on the ground in more than 50,000 locations across the nation, including the dedicated staff, members, and volunteers who every day carry out the vital work of the AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs, and the vital partners at the state service commissions.

Ms. Hughes continued with a recap of the board retreat: After the board governance discussion, Inspector General Deborah Jeffrey provided an update. The chair thanked Deb and her team for working closely with the agency to strengthen operations and accountability. Chief Operating Officer Jeff Page and Chief Financial Officer Bob McCarty gave updates on operations, the budget, and the comprehensive approach to grant oversight and risk management that the agency is implementing.

The board then had great updates by Dr. Cameron Webb, a White House Fellow, and Director of Research and Evaluation Mary Hyde. The last update at the retreat was from Acting Chief of

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External Affairs Marc Young. The board also had a conversation with Kelly Daly, the Employees Union representative.

Because ensuring that taxpayer dollars are properly and effectively spent is a key priority of the board, accountability and oversight were a continuing focus of the retreat. The board appreciates how CNCS is always working to strengthen monitoring, risk management, and accountability in a way that recognizes the strengths of CNCS grantees, which do such important work in their communities. The board also discussed how CNCS is in a strong position and is eager to work with the Trump Administration and Congress to meet national and local needs, expand opportunity, bolster civil society, and unite communities.

The chair then introduced Acting CEO Kim Mansaray.

**The Acting Chief Executive Officer's Report**

Ms. Mansaray reported to the board and public as follows:

- Regarding the budget status of CNCS: Earlier in May, Congress agreed on a spending plan to fund the Federal government for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2017; the plan was signed by President Trump. That budget agreement provides \$1.03 billion for CNCS through Fiscal Year 2017. It includes level funding for Senior Corps and AmeriCorps, but unfortunately, there was no allocation for the Social Innovation Fund. The day before the board meeting, the Trump Administration released the details of its Fiscal Year 2018 budget proposal, which provides more information regarding the recommendation to eliminate CNCS, along with 18 other Federal agencies. Ms. Mansaray noted that the budget process is a lengthy one, with many steps and negotiations ahead before the final

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congressional appropriations bills reach the President's desk. She promised to keep the board apprised of any key developments as the process moves forward during the next few months.

- The signing of the Fiscal Year 2017 omnibus spending bill allows for insight about the latest senior Corps and AmeriCorps State and National grant competitions. The outstanding work of the AmeriCorps State and National team allowed for a great deal of interest in the 2017 grant competition. In the next few weeks CNCS will award nearly 400 grants to support more than 4,500 new AmeriCorps members. Those grants will support programs at a variety of national and local nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, and educational institutions. That those grants are force multipliers for the nonprofits and organizations receiving them is demonstrated by the commitments from applicants to raise additional matching funds. The matches almost triple the funding generated via the Federal awards from CNCS.
- The Senior Corps grant competitions also drew significant interest because the Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion, and RSVP Programs provide vital and effective support to meet a variety of needs in the communities around the nation. The RSVP Expansion Competition saw increased interest, which reflects the impact of the seniors who serve in their communities. The total amount of grants requested is five and a half times greater than the amount of available funds. Nearly 50 percent of applications came from organizations that do not currently receive funds from CNCS, and 41 percent of the applications came from existing RSVP projects seeking to expand their footprint. CNCS

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takes great pride in leading service programs that that improve the lives of millions of Americans each year, and we are encouraged by the response to our grant competitions.

- CNCS continues to focus on the mission to improve the lives of more Americans through national service and volunteering. The service includes our governor-appointed state commissions, the 325,000 AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers, and the grantees, partners, and friends of national service. Our disaster service work demonstrates how Americans count on us, and the quality and of our volunteers, to support them in the wake of manmade or natural disasters such as the spillway collapse in Oroville, California, the devastating floods in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and the East Tennessee wildfires. This work is an ongoing priority for CNCS, and people are noticing. The CNCS disaster response and recovery efforts last year earned CNCS the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) Partner of the Year Award. Also, AmeriCorps NCCC was named California's disaster volunteer program of the year by California Volunteers for our work in Oroville. We take a lot of pride in our disaster work, and these awards bear this out.
- Ms. Mansaray closed by recognizing the CNCS Office of External Affairs (OEA). Our national service programs create thousands of uplifting stories each year, and thanks to OEA, we are able to highlight the fantastic work being done by CNCS for so many people, and demonstrate the importance of national service to this nation. The OEA team collaborated with our Office of Government Relations staff to ensure that our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Mayor, County, and Tribal Day for National Service was our most successful ever. More than 4,520 leaders representing over 194 million Americans showed their support for

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AmeriCorps and Senior Corps. By working with our programs, campuses, and state commissions, the External Affairs team was able to elevate our service stories during our annual AmeriCorps Week, and recently completed Senior Corps Week, to show how we can increase awareness of our programs and help people learn that many Americans rely on their service. AmeriCorps Week attracted millions of viewers and interactions across our social media channels, in addition to the attention from traditional media outlets. Our Senior Corps Week announcements and audio releases were picked up by hundreds of media outlets to promote senior volunteering to an audience numbering in the tens of millions.

**Remarks by the Board Chair**

The board chair thanked Ms. Mansaray and opened the meeting up to comments from the public. She recognized Sara Morello of Equal Justice Works.

**Remarks by Sara Morello**

Ms. Morello thanked the board members for making this opportunity for public comment and allowing her to share information. She is the executive vice president of Equal Justice Works (EJW), an organization dedicated to creating a just society by mobilizing the next generation of lawyers committed to equal justice. EJW has been a proud and grateful grantee partner of CNCS since the start of AmeriCorps. Together, CNCS and EJW have provided service opportunities for nearly 5,000 lawyers and law students who have helped hundreds of thousands of people across the country. Ms. Morello noted that their work with AmeriCorps and VISTA spans several areas that are priorities for CNCS and the country, including providing legal assistance to veterans, the elderly, unaccompanied immigrant children, and unemployed people who are trying to get back



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on their feet and are seeking employment and safe and affordable housing. Ms. Morello wanted to highlight a program that is up for a re-compete grant – a program she believes CNCS and the board should be very proud of: Employment Opportunity Legal Corps.

She noted that in the United States today, more than 65 million people – nearly one in five Americans, have a criminal record. Two-thirds of those records are for misdemeanors, often for a minor, youthful indiscretion, and yet those convictions are an obstacle to getting a job or housing. However, in more than 30 states there is a process called expungement that allows a person, with the assistance of a lawyer, to have some arrest and misdemeanor conviction records removed or sealed, thereby removing a barrier to employment. The Employment Opportunity Legal Corps provides legal assistance people need to navigate this process so they can be employed.

Equal Justice Works and AmeriCorps currently have 39 lawyers and several hundred part-time law students working in communities across the country to remove barriers to employment, and as a result, increase income, reduce recidivism, and help remove people from public assistance. Last year, for an investment of about \$1.5 million taxpayer dollars from CNCS, EJW leveraged more than a million dollars in contributions from other stakeholders and secured more than \$4.5 million in economic benefits for the clients of the AmeriCorps lawyers.

Ms. Morello told the board that unfortunately, this incredibly successful program is at risk of shutting down. Recently, EJW applied for a re-compete grant for the program. In March 2017, after the application period had closed, EJW received a letter from CNCS notifying them that CNCS had decided that EJW's application included a professional corps component and needed to be modified. EJW was caught off guard by this, since they had always applied as a traditional

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service corps. EJW organization was concerned about this for several reasons. First, the statutes governing the program allow applicants to choose whether to apply as a traditional corps or as a professional corps, and EJW does not believe the statute permits CNCS to prescribe a particular corps model to applicants. Second, the application merely continues a program model that has been in use for more than 20 years. Third, the traditional corps model has been specifically requested in interagency agreements between CNCS and the Department of Justice. EJW also found the decision troubling because reconfiguring the program under the professional corps model is simply not viable for cost reasons. Last, it did not seem fair to be changing the rules in the middle of a competition. This determination by CNCS presents an immediate risk to the Employment Opportunity Legal Corps and the economic benefits that it generates, and it also calls into question the viability of the other service corps that EJW sponsors with AmeriCorps. If, contrary to two decades of history of cooperation between CNCS and EJW, CNCS decides it can no longer support lawyers providing aid to communities in need under a traditional service model, EJW will have to end their other successful programs.

Ms. Morello ended by noting that they had yet to receive a final determination from CNCS about the status of their grant and the traditional service model of the program, and they hoped CNCS would reconsider. EJW remains optimistic that, together with CNCS, it will continue to be able to deliver the outstanding results for a great value that they have provided since 1994.

**Remarks by Jennifer Ney**

The chair introduced the next speaker, Jennifer Ney, of Voices for National Service.

Ms. Ney began her presentation by stating that she is the managing director of Voices National Service (VNS). VNS is a diverse coalition of national, state, and local National Service

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programs, state commissions, and individual volunteers who work to ensure Americans of all ages and backgrounds have the opportunity to serve and volunteer in their community.

Ms. Ney thanked the board members for allowing her to address them and deliver a statement on the Administration's Fiscal Year 2018 budget proposal for CNCS. She said that the budget proposal by President Trump, if enacted, would end eight decades of bipartisan presidential support for national service programs, leaving our veterans and their families underserved and our schools understaffed. In March, the Administration made the same recommendation in their "skinny budget," but legislative champions, including Senators Roy Blunt and Patty Murray and Representatives Tom Cole and Rosa DeLauro, ensured that funding for the critical work of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps was sustained for another year. In a statement released the previous day, VNS president AnnMaura Connolly said "If adopted, this budget would serve as a death knell for national service programs like AmeriCorps and Senior Corps." Fortunately Congress, which is ultimately responsible for funding the government, has consistently demonstrated a strong bipartisan commitment to national service, even as recently as last month. Ms. Ney said that eliminating funding for AmeriCorps and Senior Corps isn't a win for small government or the taxpayer because every dollar invested in national service yields nearly four dollars in return for society. Instead, this plan would mark a loss of the patriotic service of more than 80,000 young Americans and 270,000 seniors who serve their nation and communities through these programs each year. Without this funding, thousands of nonprofit faith-based community organizations, including the Boys and Girls Club of America, Catholic Charities, Habitat for Humanity, and Teach for America would be gutted and unable to execute their

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missions. Thousands of nonprofit faith-based community organizations would be gutted and unable to execute their missions.

Ms. Ney said that CNCS's Fiscal Year 2017 budget of \$1.03 billion is less than .03 percent of the Federal budget. CNCS, which leverages more than \$1.26 billion in resources from the private sector, foundations, and local agencies, is helping organizations around the country work in creative ways to tackle our most persistent and costly challenges.

A study by economists at Columbia University found that for every dollar invested in national service, there's a \$3.95 return to society in terms of higher earnings, increased output, and other community benefits. National service is tremendously popular. A poll of 9 battleground states found that 83 percent of registered voters, including 78 percent of Republicans, support increased or maintained Federal investment in national service.

Ms. Ney concluded by stating that Voices for National Service is committed to making a strong and compelling case for robust funding for CNCS in Fiscal Year 2018 to ensure that AmeriCorps and Senior Corps can continue to provide critically needed services in their communities next year and beyond.

**Remarks by Ms. Yasmeen Shaheen-McConnell**

The chair introduced the next speaker, Yasmeen Shaheen-McConnell, of Service Year Alliance.

Ms. Shaheen-McConnell introduced herself as the director of strategic engagement at Service Year Alliance and an AmeriCorps alum who served in 2008 with the Arab-American Resource Corps. Service Year Alliance's mission is to make a year of service a common expectation and opportunity for every young American. Achievement of this mission is a way to solve pressing problems cost-effectively and provide young people with opportunity, recruit talent and develop

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skills, increase civic responsibility and engagement, and, critically, bridge societal divides. The Alliance works to create and expand high-quality service year programs, increase the value proposition for serving, increase awareness, recruit young people to serve, and match them to service year opportunities on [serviceyear.org](http://serviceyear.org). The Alliance appreciates its valuable partnership with CNCS in support of mutual goals that include recruitment, improvement of data in the service year field, and higher program quality.

Ms. Shaheen-McConnell asked the board to imagine a future in which every young American serves. The Alliance cannot achieve its vision of making service a common expectation and opportunity without CNCS. The Alliance asks the board to work to reverse the Trump Administration's plan to eliminate CNCS and its programs, including AmeriCorps.

Ms. Shaheen-McConnell noted that AmeriCorps is a unique Federal program in several ways:

- It is the only Federal program that supports cost-effective human capital to address locally-determined challenges. AmeriCorps members help to fight the opiate crisis in Appalachian Kentucky and among tribal nations in Wisconsin, respond to wildfires in Tennessee and floods in Louisiana, support economic development in the Central Valley of California and Detroit, Michigan, help students learn to read in charter schools in Massachusetts and apply to college in rural Texas, build Habitat for Humanity homes in North Carolina and trails in Maine, assist homeless veterans in Virginia and student veterans in Washington State, and so much more.
- Unlike most Federal programs, the bulk of AmeriCorps funding is directed by bipartisan citizen-driven commissions appointed by governors. More than 1,000 private citizens serve as governor-appointed commissioners, leading and guiding national service efforts

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in their states by identifying local needs, directing Federal and state resources, ensuring oversight and accountability, tracking performance and community impact, and leading citizen service efforts in their states and territories.

- Any public or private nonprofit organization can run an AmeriCorps program. Whereas most Federal programs direct their funding to a specific type of grantee, AmeriCorps can support any agency, whether it is faith-based or government run, national or local. This design allows for maximum flexibility regarding which organization can play a role in meeting community needs.
- While many programs either address community needs or support workforce development, only AmeriCorps does both, and in a manner that also builds civic responsibility and creates purpose-driven leaders. The service aspect of the program sets it apart from traditional strategies to solve problems or build skills, making the experience transformational for almost everyone who serves in the program.
- AmeriCorps plays a special role bridging divides by connecting people from different races, religions, and regions in common purpose. Through this experience, they build ties and understanding that most other institutions do not foster.
- AmeriCorps provides public benefits earned through service – in this case, money for higher education or to pay back student loans.
- AmeriCorps uses Federal dollars to leverage private resources. Unlike most other programs, when AmeriCorps funds a position, typically organizations raise even more than they get. If the proposed Federal cuts go through, it is not likely that private funding

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would make up the Federal share. Most of the private funding would also shrink away. In a way, cutting one dollar from AmeriCorps results in two leaving the field entirely.

Ms. Shaheen-McConnell concluded her remarks by noting that Service Year Alliance is working to enlist all sectors of society in support of service year opportunities. The Alliance sees AmeriCorps as an essential part of that effort and urges the board to take action to reverse the proposed cuts and put AmeriCorps on a growth trajectory for the future. In response to a question from Vice Chair Dean Reuter, she said that none of the Service Year Alliance budget comes from CNCS.

**Conclusion of the Meeting**

Ms. Hughes concluded the board meeting by thanking the members of the board, the CNCS staff, and the members of the public for joining the board meeting. The meeting led to an important discussion, and she appreciated everyone's attention. She adjourned the board meeting.