

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICORPS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS PUBLIC MEETING

Washington, D.C.

Wednesday, July 19, 2023

PARTICIPANTS:

Board Members:

MICHAEL D. SMITH
Chief Executive Officer

CATHERINE "CATHY" MCLAUGHLIN
Board Chair

ALVIN WARREN
Board Member

LISETTE NIEVES
Board Member

FLOR ROMERO
Board Member

* * * * *

A G E N D A

Opening Remarks by the Chair

CEO Report

OGA Committee Report

Virtual Spotlight on Climate

Public Comments

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

(2:00 p.m.)

CLERK: Good afternoon and thank you for joining us today. Let's review the Zoom technology before we begin. The audio for this event is being broadcast by phone and online. This event is lecture only. The microphones are muted to reduce background noise. To adjust the audio through your computer, go to the bottom left of the screen, click the small arrow next to the audio settings and select a speaker. Some viewers get better audio by the link, while others get better quality by phone. So, if you have any audio difficulties, you may want to try a different connection method.

There are several Zoom features we will use. At the top of the screen, click the "view options" button and select "exit full screen" to display the chat panel on the right side of the slides. Use the chat panel to receive links and resource information from the panelists or to share an idea and respond to session activities.

When using chat, please select everyone from the drop-down menu. This allows everyone to see your comments. Use the "raise hand" feature if you have technical issues and need assistance. The support team will contact you individually via chat.

Select the closed captioning icon for live captioning in English. If you wish to view captioning in Spanish, select the stream text link posted in the chat to view them in your browser.

We will be recording this event, so let's start the recording and turn it over to our presenters.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Good afternoon and welcome to the -- the Board meeting will now come to order. I want to welcome all of you today. Thank you for joining us this afternoon. It's great to have everyone together again. My name is Catherine McLaughlin. I'm honored to serve as the chair along with my distinguished colleagues, who come from a diverse group background and bring a unique perspective to the Board of AmeriCorps.

On behalf of AmeriCorps, I'd like to offer our gratitude and thanks to Deb Jeffrey. I just want to mention Deb because she served as our Inspector General since 2012. Deb was recently appointed as [the] Inspector General for the Securities and Exchange Commission. They're lucky to have her and we will miss her dedication to AmeriCorps. The good news is that Stephen Ravas has stepped up to serve as the Acting Inspector General. We met with him yesterday and we look forward to working with him in the future.

Today, we are joining you from New York. Just for a sense of AmeriCorps here, there's over 26,000 members serving in 1,900 sites around the state. Earlier this month, our CEO, Michael Smith, was here in New York to present the President's Volunteer Service Award in partnership with the Yankees. For 14 years, the Yankees have celebrated an annual "HOPE Week," where they present an award to local organizations or leaders who inspire hope, goodwill, and encouragement.

Now, I am a girl from Boston, so this is a little hard to say, but I'm very happy they do this. This year's award was presented to Street Lab, a nonprofit that creates safe and engaging spaces and builds connection among New Yorkers. The service leaders who get these awards are powered by some incredible partners across every state, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and we're excited to honor all of these folks who are doing such great works.

These people who are working across the country respond to urgent needs in times of crisis. They support the daily work of strengthening communities, and they create meaningful opportunities for those who serve, so they can learn new skills, explore new careers, build relationships, and expand their professional networks. AmeriCorps brings a lot of things to the table for not only the communities they serve, but for the AmeriCorps members who are part of our team. So, to all the AmeriCorps members who are with us here today, I'm hoping you're taking advantage of your time.

Since our last public Board meeting, we've had the pleasure to announce more than \$444 million in AmeriCorps State and National funding to state service commissions, going to more than 350 nonprofit, faith, and community-based organizations. They are doing this work every day. And we also presented \$37 million for new VISTA projects. Now, that's truly something to celebrate.

Throughout the spring, AmeriCorps has also been able to bring grantees together to learn from one another, deepen communities of practice, and connect more directly with the AmeriCorps staff. And I want to congratulate all the staff members who are with us here today for all the hard work that they are doing under Michael's leadership to really get as engaged as they can with our members all across the country.

This afternoon, Alvin Warren is with us, and he was able to join one of the convenings with the Native Nations grantees and even some potential Native grantees. And he said that the last time that they met was 2007?

MR. WARREN: Yes.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: So, it's great to see that we're getting out as much as we can into the field. It was an opportunity to have important and meaningful discussions about how to make federal funding through AmeriCorps more accessible and inclusive, and how we can reduce barriers to service across Indian country.

I continue to be proud of this team, our network of incredible partners, and of course, the AmeriCorps members and the AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers for getting things done coast to coast.

The Board had an opportunity this morning to hear from some members here doing work right in New York City. They were an amazing group of people who told us stories. I think one of the most meaningful parts of their conversation was how [serving] changed them and how it was life changing for their career. And there were a couple people who were alumni. There was one person [who] they kept talking about this full circle experience where they were an AmeriCorps member, they went on to work, and they're now working as a staff person in the organization that they came into through AmeriCorps.

So I'm looking to hear more from our members today that we're going to [talk with] today. Flor is going to introduce us to some other members who are doing great things as well. And I just want to remind everyone: Part of the reason we do this is really for everybody on the phone with us and joining us by Zoom to really understand more about what we're doing. And we want to hear from you, because we can only do as much as we can do. But the more we know about what you're doing and we can share those stories, that's our role in this.

So, feel free when we have the question and answers later -- if you have anything you'd like to ask or share with us, we're happy to have you.

At this point, I'm going to review the agenda for a few minutes. First, we're going to have Michael Smith, who will share the CEO's report. Then Alvin Warren will provide an Oversight, Governance, and Audit [Committee] report. And then we'll have a virtual tour with AmeriCorps work in conservation and climate change. We'll conclude by opening up the meeting for comments.

Again -- we'll give you instructions when we get closer to that, but we'll be using your "raise your hand" feature on Zoom. If you're joining by conference call instead of Zoom, you will not be able to comment. There isn't a capacity for that.

Now, I'd just like to turn it over to Michael so he can talk a little about his report for this...quarter, I guess it is...and we'll go from there. So, thank you, everyone, and welcome. Michael?

MR. SMITH: Cathy, thank you so much. And thank you all for joining us today. I just want to echo Cathy's sentiment when I say I could not be prouder of this team, but I also couldn't be more grateful for this Board. I know many of you who are out there running nonprofits or organizations may not always have the easiest relationship with your Board members -- or maybe you do. I have an extraordinary Board of proximate, passionate individuals who care so deeply about our mission, and I just want to thank them for their service. I also want to thank our champions, our network of partners, philanthropic supporters, our strong group of bipartisan supporters across government, whether it's state or local or Federal. I want to thank you for your support. And of course I want to thank our 200,000 AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers who are stepping up every single day in more than 40,000 locations across the country.

I want to start off by talking about equity. You know, centering equity and reducing barriers to service has been essential to AmeriCorps' mission in the Biden-Harris Administration, and it has been one of my top priorities. Last summer, President Biden called on Congress to increase the minimum living allowance to \$15 an hour by 2025. And while we wait for Congress to act, since our last public Board meeting we have done everything in our power to put us on a path to where we need to be. For members who are serving with AmeriCorps VISTA, the living allowance has increased to the equivalent of \$11 an hour beginning this month. A change to \$11 an hour will also be reflected in the FY 2024 Competitive Notices for AmeriCorps State and National. These changes represent a nearly \$4 an hour increase for VISTA and more than 6 percent increase for State and National compared to 2022.

This has been a top priority during this Administration. And critically, these increases finally create parity between the two AmeriCorps programs. NCCC -- our National Civilian Community Corps -- will also see a living allowance increase of 6 percent. That means over the last two years, there has been a total of a 10 percent increase for NCCC. We have also established new healthcare allowances to cover the rising cost of hygiene and personal care items and increased travel day food allowances. I have met with our NCCC members who are working hard building houses in the heat, and I'm glad we're going to get them more money for more food!

And just last week, we announced revisions to the National Service Trust, which is used to pay our Segal Education Awards. The rule changes that we're making are going to increase flexibility for how the funds can be used, such as allowing members to transfer their education awards to people in their family. They also clarify other requirements and terminology around extensions, transfers, and revocations.

Raising the living allowance, reducing barriers to service, and creating meaningful economic and educational pathways are fundamental and necessary to increase recruitment, to ensure AmeriCorps looks like America, and to create significant and lasting impact for our communities.

I've had the opportunity to see this impact up close. As Cathy mentioned, we recently announced millions of dollars in grant funding, and I was able to join programs, state service commissions, and elected officials on the road to celebrate these investments and to present President's Volunteer Service Awards to community changemakers. Recently in Nevada, I was joined by Congresswoman Susie Lee and Nevada Volunteers, where we announced \$7 billion in investments to strengthen communities through 12 local organizations. Also while in Nevada, I had the opportunity to meet Heather, an AmeriCorps member serving with ReInvent Schools in Las Vegas, and I've been thinking about Heather and her story ever since.

Heather told us that during the pandemic, she was laid off from her job as a housekeeper, as many hospitality staff in the city were. And at the time, Heather had one small child and a baby on the way. She didn't have a high school degree, and she told me [that] honestly, things for her and her family were looking dark. She said one day, she found a mobile preschool for her son. A mobile preschool -- it was actually an RV that would go into underserved communities and provide preschool services -- and that mobile preschool was supported by AmeriCorps members serving with ReInvent Schools. Over the time of her son going to that program, she got to know the staff, who recognized her potential, and they encouraged her to apply for an AmeriCorps position.

And this decision, Heather told me, was life changing. As an AmeriCorps member, she felt supported by the team, and she was finally able to finish her GED. Today, Heather has been accepted into college to study early childhood education and will be using her Segal Education Award to help pay for it at one of our 300 "Schools of National Service" that offers discounts to AmeriCorps alumni. So Heather, I hope you're watching, and I want you to know how much you are an inspiration to us and really demonstrate the AmeriCorps spirit.

I also had the opportunity recently to visit Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan, which oversees three AmeriCorps Seniors programs: Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and RSVP. I was joined there by the House Education and Workforce Committee member, Congressman John James, for a roundtable discussion with volunteers. And I was thrilled he could hear about the impact that service has, not just on the community members, but also on the lives of the older adults who serve.

The congressman and I presented an award Miss Dorothy, who has been a Senior Companion for more than 20 years, serving 20,000 hours. Miss Dorothy has been a constant source of light and dignity in her community. And she was most proud of helping six clients remain in their homes until their passing -- a tremendous gift for them and their families.

And just a few weeks ago, I was in Mystic, Connecticut, joined by Congressman Joe Courtney, visiting a Veterans Coffeehouse gathering to present President's Volunteer Service Awards to several outstanding AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteers, all of whom were veterans or members of military families, including an honorary award to service dog, Rosie, who along with her owner, Barry, a Navy vet, helps RSVP clients combat social isolation. It was funny -- we couldn't get Rosie to sit still for the photo, and Barry said she just wants to "get back to work, stop with all of these photos!" So, we need more Heathers, we need more Miss Dorothys, and we need more Barrys and Rosies so that we can improve even more lives and make a difference across this country.

At the same time, I know that recruitment is a challenge. We're hearing it everywhere -- not just us, but certainly [also] from military and corporate America. Recently, AmeriCorps has made it possible for our state service commission partners to use what we call Commission Incentive Funds, or CIF dollars, to support recruitment. So far, about 30 commissions have added capacity to expand recruitment efforts. I'm encouraged by this opportunity, especially as I'm hearing from our state and city leaders, just how important it is to build service leadership in their hometowns.

I had the chance to speak to many of these leaders last month at the U.S. Conference of Mayors convening in Columbus and at the Western Governors Association gathering in Boulder, Colorado. In Colorado, I joined with our former AmeriCorps colleague and now Commission Director, John Kelly, and an AmeriCorps alum named Narya from Mile High Youth Corps, who developed her forestry and fire mitigation career through AmeriCorps.

We reminded the governors and their teams that we met that AmeriCorps not only strengthens their states, their cities, and their neighborhoods, but it can also help them accomplish their respective administrations' goals around education, climate, veterans and military families, economic opportunity, and so much more. And elected officials on both sides of the aisle are eager to leverage the "people power" of national service to get things done.

We know there are some challenges that lie ahead as we seek to finalize funding for the next fiscal year. Last week, many of you heard that the House Appropriations Subcommittee took the first step in that process with their FY 2024 appropriations proposal. Unfortunately, the Republican

proposal would cut AmeriCorps' budget by 50 percent, which would have a devastating impact on programs, on members, volunteers, and the communities that we serve.

What's fortunate is this is the start of a long process with many more steps along the way. And we are eager to continue working with our colleagues in Congress, with the support of our champions in the bipartisan National Service Caucus, to ensure that AmeriCorps continues to have the chance to serve others and enrich their own lives through the power of AmeriCorps.

I've seen firsthand that AmeriCorps programs are vital to the health, safety, and prosperity of America. And over the coming weeks, we're going to continue to share stories of AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers to ensure more Americans know just how vital their service is. I hope that all of you who have served in AmeriCorps will join by sharing your own story. You can do that on your social media platforms. You can do it by going back to your high school and colleges. You can do it by going to your churches and mosques and synagogues. But share your story about the impact that you created in communities, and how for so many of you, including some of our Board members, it was the spark that you needed to continue to serve your country in the social sector and the nonprofit sector in so many other ways.

So, for nearly three decades -- actually, it will be three decades because September will be the 30th anniversary of AmeriCorps -- for those three decades, we've been betting on national service as one of the most powerful tools to bring Americans together to solve tough challenges. And that bet is paying off. More than 1.25 million AmeriCorps members have served. Millions more have served as AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers. This September, we will celebrate 30 years of AmeriCorps, and we will show the world that AmeriCorps is not a moment, it is a movement.

We have seen how serving with AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors can spark a lifetime of volunteering, civic engagement, and giving back, creating a service movement across the nation. A legacy of bipartisan leaders helped build the foundation for national service and volunteering, uniting Americans across divides under a shared purpose to strengthen communities, to transform lives, and to get things done. And we are excited to celebrate this movement with you all year long -- so stay tuned for more updates!

With that, I am now happy to turn it back over to our Board Chair, Cathy.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Thank you, Michael. I wish Michael had a little more enthusiasm. [laughter] I always say, Michael is always so enthusiastic and it's great for all of us to see how much he cares about the work that

he's doing and how much you impact when he goes out on these trips. Your stories and the work that you do really impact all of us. So, thank you, Michael.

Anybody have any comments -- are we good? Okay, if not, we're going to move on to Alvin Warren, who's going to have the same enthusiasm for our Oversight, Governance, and Audit Committee. So I'm going to turn it over to you, Alvin.

MR. WARREN: Absolutely. Well, good afternoon to you too. Good afternoon to you, everybody. My name is Alvin Warren. I'm from Santa Clara Pueblo, a Tribal community in northern New Mexico, and I'm honored to chair our Oversight, Governance, and Audit Committee. I saw in the chat that one of my fellow New Mexicans has joined. So, Annette Quam, you're going to get a shout-out from here. Thank you for joining us. And thank you all for your service, everyone who's joined us today.

So, I also want to express appreciation to my fellow committee members, Fagan Harris, who is not joining us for this part of the Board meeting. But I also want to thank and welcome our newest member of the OGA, Lisette Nieves, is our Board member and we're very excited to have her and her expertise on the OGA.

So, this committee, for those of you who maybe haven't heard yet about what we're doing, is dedicated to supporting AmeriCorps' progress and improving the effective stewardship of our funds, and in particular, monitoring and supporting the plans and progress our agency is making toward really important financial operational reforms.

Our committee meets quarterly and at our most recent meeting in June we discussed several things, so I'll just give you a sense of what some of those topics were. We talked about the status of the FY 2023 Financial Statement Audit; the process improvements that are being made to our audit process; the reprioritization of significant funding to support the reform work that I just mentioned; and the progress that we've been making -- and we have been making significant progress as an agency towards reform -- including the onboarding of something we're calling the Rapid Assessment Team that's helping us to target key areas for reform; the key milestone achievements that our agency has accomplished in modernizing our legacy systems, particularly our grant systems; the development of a dashboard to provide insight into the financial transformation, internal processes, and structural improvements, and IT modernization efforts. Now, you all could be forgiven for maybe having your eyes glaze over a little bit as I say this, but what we know to be true is, for us -- for you all -- to do the great work you're doing, we have to have a solid structure here at AmeriCorps. And we are all

committed to this to make sure that the movement that Michael talked about is a movement that lasts long into the future.

So we're proud, the members of this committee, to serve our Board and to serve all of you in working with our expert staff in this kind of work. And I want to say that the progress over the past year has been evident. And we do look forward to seeing further progress, and that includes progress that's being made with contractors that have been brought on board this year to help accelerate and support our efforts.

Our committee is going to continue to explore ways to be valuable to our agency as these reform efforts continue. And we do want to invite your feedback. So, if you have feedback that you would like to provide, please email us at board@cns.gov. That's board@cns.gov.

So thank you and I'll turn it back to you, Cathy.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Anyone else have any comments on that? I want to thank Alvin for taking the lead on this. This is not the easiest part of the work that we do, and he's been doing a fabulous job, along with staff, so -- thank you for that, Alvin.

I'm looking forward to this next agenda item. At our last three Board meetings, we've had virtual tours across the country. One of our staff members said, "This is the best way to really learn about what's happening here." At our meetings in 2022, we focused on education and the American Rescue Plan investments. We heard from some folks who are working on public health. And for this meeting, our virtual tour will focus on AmeriCorps' extensive work and investment in climate change and environmental stewardship.

I'm now going to turn this over to Flor Romero, who is one of our Board members, and who is going to be our virtual tour guide for this.

MS. ROMERO: Thanks, Cathy.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Flor, the floor is yours. [panel laughter]

MS. ROMERO: Thanks, Cathy. Before we jump in, I just want to say I love seeing everyone introduce themselves in the chat. We love seeing where you all are coming from and it just -- it makes us feel like you're in the room with us. So thank you so much.

So, throughout the history of the agency and the legacy of national service, environmental stewardship has been one of AmeriCorps' key focus areas. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers respond to climate change-related disasters, increase access to the outdoors and

green spaces, revitalize and protect local, state, and national parks and tribal land. And they do so much more. As part of the Biden-Harris Administration's whole-of-government response to climate change, AmeriCorps has increased its focus on climate change.

Last year, AmeriCorps invested \$117 million in climate and environmental stewardship projects, a 20 percent increase over the previous year. This investment is paying off. Last year, AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers weatherized or retrofitted more than 4,800 homes and public structures.+ They restored or protected over 650 structures after natural disasters and provided environmental stewardship, education, and training to more than 360,000 individuals. These pathways to green jobs show that climate crisis is not only an existential threat that must be averted, but is an unprecedented opportunity to create millions of new jobs and build a more sustainable and equitable future.

The team has put together a virtual cross-country tour for us today, so we can hear directly from AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers across the country who are doing the important work of addressing climate change and driving environmental stewardship.

So, we're going to get started on our tour. We're going to get started on the West Coast -- California, with our friend who's joining us today, Chiena Ty, an AmeriCorps member serving with California Climate Action Force. Hi, Chiena.

MS. TY: Hello.

MS. ROMERO: Thanks, Chiena. Last month, Chiena had the rare opportunity to introduce President Biden at a climate resilience event in Palo Alto, California. Chiena, can you tell us about your service in the California Climate Action Corps and how you are working to combat the climate crisis in the community that you serve?

MS. TY: Of course. So, my name is Chiena. Like you all, I have a connection with the Biden Administration, as I recently introduced President Biden at his address on historic climate investments. But before I dive into sharing more about that, I will introduce myself as an AmeriCorps member and a California Climate Action Corps fellow.

In California, there are over 100 other Climate Action Corps fellows like me working in the focus areas of urban greening, wildfire resiliency, and organic waste and edible food recovery. I've spent the last 10 months as an organic waste and food recovery fellow at White Pony Express, a food and goods rescue organization in Pleasant Hill, California. As a California Climate Action Corps fellow, I help the organization with capturing content, marketing, and volunteer recruitment. The work at

White Pony Express would not be possible without the hundreds of volunteers signed up to assist with food rescue, so, we are constantly interested in reinforcing our volunteer sign-up with new and regular volunteers.

At White Pony Express, we rescue 8,000-10,000 pounds of fresh, healthy food daily from grocery stores and certain restaurants because these foods are at or near their expiration date and because new inventory is coming in and they need to get rid of their surplus stock. Before we stepped in, all these still-fresh and healthy food would go directly to landfills. And when food rots it emits a greenhouse gas called methane, which is a harmful pollutant that is a major driver of the climate crisis. So, since its founding in 2013, White Pony Express has prevented 25,000 tons of methane from entering the air we breathe, by diverting 20 million pounds of food from landfills and redistributing it to our neighbors in need.

MS. ROMERO: I feel like I just learned so much and I'm sure? I'm not the only one here! Thank you so much. Thank you so much for sharing that. And there's so many other questions. You can see already how people are inspired by you. So, thank you so much for joining us today.

What are your plans for the future, and how has your time in AmeriCorps shaped them?

MS. TY: So, my time in service has been an incredible journey about advocating for climate action happening at our local organization, learning how to market and educate others about our nonprofit, and being invited to several speaking opportunities for the Climate Action Corps, such as my recent opportunity to introduce President Biden at an event where he announced new actions his Administration is taking to protect coastal and Great Lake communities, like mine, from the impacts of climate change.

And so, after my time in this fellowship, I plan on continuing spreading the message of climate action through eco-conscious marketing, as well as pursuing roles that have a need for a speaker, an advocate, because of how much I enjoyed speaking to my community about a cause I feel so passionate about working with others to solve -- combating climate change. I believe the real impact of climate action is getting everyone to take action. And through my experience at this fellowship, I have learned how valuable education and marketing are to accomplishing this ultimate goal.

So, paired with my service and my passion for marketing, I know I'm setting myself up to be a leader for climate action in California.

MS. ROMERO: You're already a leader, Chiena. Thank you so much. Keep doing what you're doing, keep advocating, and thank you so much for joining us today.

MS. TY: Awesome, everyone. Thank you, everyone. Great to be here.

MS. ROMERO: Thanks, Chiena. So, now, we're going to be heading to Arkansas to hear from Jessica Mysliwski, a current AmeriCorps NCCC member who is about to complete her 10 months of service with AmeriCorps NCCC out of the Southwest region. Hi, Jessica.

MS. MYSLIWSKI: Hi, everyone.

MS. ROMERO: Jessica, can you please introduce yourself and tell us about the program you serve in and how long you have been serving?

MS. MYSLIWSKI: Sure. So my name is Jessica, and I'm an AmeriCorps NCCC [member] serving out of the Southwest region in Denver, Colorado. And we're actually just about to complete our 10 months of service, as we graduate tomorrow. So -- lots of exciting things happening on campus. Throughout that [time], I've gotten to travel to a variety of locations, from Missouri to Arkansas, to even Tennessee and to Kansas, as well. So, we've gotten to see a lot of different communities in different states, and there's just a lot of things that I've taken away from each of the places I've been to.

MS. ROMERO: That's awesome. Your NCCC team is currently working on two farms in Arkansas, one of which provides environmental education to youth and the other farm provides healthy food options to local food pantries in hopes of creating a more sustainable and healthy community -- always an amazing goal. Can you share what your team is doing on a day-to-day basis and share a moment where you might have witnessed the impact of your team's service?

MS. MYSLIWSKI: Sure. So on a day-to-day basis, we did a lot of harvesting of produce on both of the farms. We actually harvested about 4,000 pounds for the two months that we were there in Fayetteville, and that was a pretty outstanding accomplishment for us. And we just really helped with those farms with getting that food out into the community, so that other people could come to the farms and distribute it to local food banks and to local schools.

And the moment, I guess, I saw the most direct impact of my service was -- one day I got to go to an elementary school with a couple of other teammates and we were able to distribute some free produce to school children, or to children who had just gotten out of summer school programs. And just to see the excitement on their face -- kind of

grabbing a bag of produce that we had packed with a recipe in it that they could use that produce for -- was pretty exciting to see, because a lot of these students hadn't really been exposed to these vegetables before, or there can be an apprehension against, you know, green foods and whatnot. So, it was really neat to see them so excited about it.

But when I reflect on my whole service term, I would have to say that my greatest connection that I've noticed with my service and climate change is more or less noticing the patterns of it. I wouldn't say that [through] my service we directly, kind of, combated climate change or tried to tackle it. But having the opportunity to travel across the U.S. into a variety of communities allowed me to see how these patterns were changing.

For example, at the two farms we were at in Arkansas, the life cycle of their produce is kind of shifting to earlier in the season. And the farmers we worked with were saying that they were needing to harvest the produce sooner and kind of chop it down sooner because of increased temperatures earlier on in the season. And then before we were on the farms, we were actually deployed last minute for disaster relief with the American Red Cross in both Memphis, Tennessee and Little Rock, Arkansas. And there was a lot of talk of how Tornado Alley is perhaps shifting slightly, geographically, due to different changes in climate. So it was really interesting for me to be able to see how climate change is affecting the patterns in different communities across the country.

MS. ROMERO: That's powerful. Thank you so much for sharing that. And what would you say your plans are for the future? And how has your time in service kind of shaped that?

MS. MYSLIWSKI: So starting this fall, I'll be going to the University of Georgia to get my master's in integrative conservation and sustainability. Specifically, I'll be doing research in sustainable agriculture and policy. And my experience on our two farms for our last main project kind of helped me to realize that I would like to focus more on large-scale agriculture.

Those two farms were relatively small. One of them was a 25-acre farm, but they were for more localized production. And while I think that was an ideal way to go about it, I don't think it'll be possible for us to shift completely away from large-scale industrialized agriculture. So I would love to do more research and work in seeing how I can address that type of farm production and seeing how I can make that more sustainable.

MS. ROMERO: And then once you learn, share it with the rest of us because it takes everyone, right? Thank you so much for joining us, Jessica. And good luck in grad school, on behalf of all of us here today.

MS. MYSLIWSKI: Thank you so much. Thanks for having me.

MS. ROMERO: All right -- so next on our tour, we are going to be heading to Belvedere, Illinois to hear from Mark Luthin. Mark is an AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteer serving with Lifescape Community Services.

Mark, are you there?

MR. LUTHIN: Hi, I'm here.

MS. ROMERO: Hi, Mark. After teaching biology and environmental science at the high school level for 32 years, he started volunteering with Boone County Conservation District on land stewardship activities, and his involvement has grown ever since.

Mark, please share more about the program you serve in and how long you've been serving.

MR. LUTHIN: Thank you for inviting me to speak today. I will warn you, asking a former teacher to keep it under four minutes is almost impossible [laughter] -- just a warning, but I'm going to try. After retiring from teaching in 2016, I have been a volunteer land steward with the Boone County Conservation District here in Belvidere, Illinois, way up at the northern portion of Illinois. And as a steward, we're involved in a wide range of activities, including native seed collecting. We clean those seeds and then sow them in new areas where we would like to establish a prairie or woodland or whatever. We participate in invasive species removal, including hand-pulling garlic mustard and clearing brush like honeysuckle and buckthorn. We've done a lot of fence pulling. Barbed wire fence is fun to pull. [laughter] Green planting is much more fun. We also participate in spring prairie burns and oftentimes fall or winter forest burns. And I also get to help lead field trips on occasion, with students from local schools.

Also, since 2017, I've been volunteering with the Natural Land Institute. It's a nonprofit organization here in Rockford, Illinois, next to Belvidere, and its mission is to protect and preserve natural areas. I happen to be the Outreach and Engagement Committee chair. It's formerly the Education Committee. I'm also the vice president of the Board, and that put me on the Executive Committee, so I get to go to a few meetings. I also serve on the Land Conservation Committee, the DEI Task Force, and a couple other committees. It's awesome.

MS. ROMERO: What a busy guy!

MR. LUTHIN: Yeah. They say retirement, you're supposed to take it easy, right? [laughter] I do help lead the Conservation at Home and Work programs, which certifies homes and schools, churches, and factories that might use native plantings, and minimize their use of chemicals on their property. And they slow water runoff on their properties as well.

I get a chance to lead trips with local high schools. I do still like working with youth, which is a lot of fun. And I also try to participate in some of their stewardship activities, including brush clearing, seed collecting, prairie burns, et cetera.

MS. ROMERO: Awesome. Thank you so much, Mark. Can you tell us what led you to volunteer service focused on environmental education and why you think it's so important?

MR. LUTHIN: Yeah. Thank you. Having taught environmental education for 32 years, I had the chance to lead and expose young minds on the importance of protecting our natural world. Two of these young people are currently the full-time land stewards at the Conservation District where I volunteer. So now they get to boss me around.

Doing our small part to protect and preserve nature and helping to educate others on the importance of natural habitats is key not only to other species' survival, but also ours. Tying this work to our climate challenge? Well, I'm from the Prairie State. Prairies can sequester huge amounts of carbon because most of the biomass is locked up underground in the roots. Many prairie plants have root systems extending 10, 15, or more feet down. Prairies control flooding. They're drought resistant -- or they tend to be more drought resistant. And of course, they help protect pollinators, which is important to feeding our species.

MS. ROMERO: Thanks, Mark. What do you hope that future generations take from the environmental education you and the other AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers provide?

MR. LUTHIN: I'll tell you, I'm really inspired by the young people that you have on this panel. Chiena, Jessica, and you'll hear from Domingo in a minute. As an environmental educator, I was able to take a number of field trips. My hope was that by exposing young people to the wonders of nature, that they would feel more inclined to want to protect it. And that's still my hope -- by helping to protect and preserve some of these lands that we've been in, people will see the benefits of that.

I've had a chance to work with a number of AmeriCorps interns, both at the Conservation District and NLI. We even housed two interns for a summer. And it's a lot of fun and it's inspiring to me. Two of my nieces were in AmeriCorps, and they had wonderful experiences.

It's easy to watch the news and feel overwhelmed. But seeing the younger generation's passion for the environment is contagious. And that gives me hope.

MS. ROMERO: Thank you so much for sharing that. Thank you for your service and keep doing what you're doing. Thank you.

MR. LUTHIN: Thank you.

MS. ROMERO: All right. And last, but certainly not least, our final stop for our tour is right here in NYC -- New York City. Domingo Morales discovered his passion for urban farming and composting as a Green City Force AmeriCorps member in Brooklyn.

Hi, Domingo.

MR. MORALES: Hey.

MS. ROMERO: After serving with Green City Force, Domingo founded Compost Power, the largest human-powered compost site in the country. His work to make compost cool has been profiled in the New York Times and CBS News.

Domingo, please tell us about your service in Green City Force and how it led to your founding of Compost Power. What lessons and experiences were you able to bring from your AmeriCorps service to the organization?

MR. MORALES: Hey. Thank you for the opportunity to be here. So, I served with Green City Force back in 2015. I grew up living in a New York City public housing community, and that makes up 1 in 15 New Yorkers. So, it's like a city within a city. And in most cases, people who live in public housing are underserved -- there's a lack of healthy food access, and there's a lack of sustainability education. And when I was about 23 years old, I had an existential crisis. I was working dead end jobs. I really didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. And then I saw a flyer on the elevator in my building, with an AmeriCorps logo and Green City Force, and it was a bunch of young adults, just like myself, working in a garden. And that just attracted me. I said, "Well, I don't know what to do with myself anyway, so let me just apply for this program."

So I applied, and I did not think that I would be working on a farm. Green City Force has an urban farm program where they teach young adults how to grow food in the public housing community and then give that food away for free. They also had an energy efficiency program where they were going in and do an energy audit in apartments and weatherizing apartments. And they also were doing cool roofs -- so they were painting roofs white to kind of reduce the heat island effect in the city.

So, I was more interested in the tech -- solar panels, energy... But they put me on the farm team. And I was very disappointed -- I didn't want to be on the farm team. But I ended up joining the farm team, and I fell in love with it! I fell in love with growing food. I tasted vegetables that I would have never touched growing up in New York City, and I just learned to love it, but what I loved more was what was happening beneath the soil. How are we able to grow this food? Where are the nutrients coming from? And that's what drew me to composting. For part of my service, I was at the largest compost site in the U.S. that didn't use fossil fuels. And we were processing this organic waste by hand with hundreds of volunteers every week. And I just fell in love with meeting new people, learning the science behind composting. I was introduced to the FBI -- fungus, bacteria, and insects. [laughter]

Seven months into the program, I applied for a job at one of the training sites with the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and I ended up getting the job with the experience that I was able to acquire through AmeriCorps. And you know, traditionally, people like me don't get jobs in that field and in that industry. So, it was a door being kicked wide open with my service, and that's really how I ended up composting. I worked in the compost realm with the Brooklyn Botanic Garden for about five years until the city defunded its composting initiatives, and then Compost Power was born. I was laid off, and instead of, you know, stopping the work and finding another job or looking for a new trade, I decided to pay it forward by coming back to Green City Force, creating a partnership, building compost sites in the public housing community, and hiring the young adults that come through Green City Force. I hire the alumni, and we actually partner -- we have a symbiotic relationship. They do the urban farming, we do the composting, and we're able to educate residents and young adults through our service.

MS. ROMERO: Awesome. That is amazing. I think your story is a perfect example of not misdirection, but redirection --

MR. SMITH: Right.

MS. ROMERO: -- to do what you are doing, and it's so inspiring to hear that. Also, you know, composting, it's a secret science power that everyone can tap into. Thank you for reminding us of that. So can you tell us what the future looks like for you and your organization? And from your purview, what can AmeriCorps do for continued activation in the client space?

MR. MORALES: Yeah -- so, I think going forward, I'm just going to build as many compost sites in the public housing community as possible and create more job opportunities, but in the process, listen to the

community and figure out other issues that might be there. So now we're not only composting, but we're using composting as a tool to mitigate rodent populations in the public housing community. We're using composting as a pest control. And that's what Compost Power's about, making compost cool and removing those negative stigmas behind composting. When done right, you can eliminate odors in the community, you're reducing truck traffic, but also, you're taking the food away from the rodents that make the health of our people lower than it should be.

So I think just building more compost sites, creating more job opportunities is the future for Compost Power. And I think AmeriCorps should just continue doing what it's doing, focusing on specific issues, right? Composting, we're focused on food waste, growing food. We're focused on feeding people. You're focused on energy by doing energy audits and weatherizing buildings. So continue doing what you're doing and focus on specific issues. People tend to listen to the word climate change, and they go crazy, and they become skeptical, but if we can just focus on these little issues, single issues, and work together as a community, as a corps network, then we can address climate change without even using that big word. Right? But yeah, that's about it.

MS. ROMERO: Domingo, your passion is overflowing. You're doing amazing work, and I think it's a perfect example of AmeriCorps alumni and leaders, how you're powering innovation in the nonprofit sector. So, just keep it up, and we can't wait to hear about more of the success of the organization. Thank you so much, Domingo.

Now, if all of our speakers can turn on your cameras just one more time and as they come on, I just want to thank Chiena, Jennifer, Mark, and Domingo for joining us today and for helping us to better understand the incredible work and impact that our members and volunteers are having in environmental stewardship. Twenty minutes really isn't enough. I could listen to you all talk for a long time and just keep learning, so I can spell it out to other people, because it is such an important topic that we're discussing today.

So -- we greatly appreciate your service, and we just wish you all continued success. You have so much love in the chat. I love seeing it as well.

If any Board members would like to ask any questions or make a comment for our speakers? Anyone? Alvin?

MR. WARREN: I would. Wow. I've farmed for most of my life, in my community, very small-scale farming. My kids are involved in land reclamation work and, you know, the kind of seed-saving and restoration work that Mark, you talked about. You all are an absolute inspiration. I

can't thank you enough for your service. But I also just think your example is amazing. And Flor said it, you know, this example that you all set of being able to use this experience to identify, to tap into your inherent potential, your strengths, and to sort of grow them, literally, pun intended, in all these areas.

Again, we're looking at the chat as we're hearing from you, and people are just overflowing with pride. So, you make us very proud with everything that you're doing.

Apparently, Domingo, you're a star, because I've seen at least three different stories that have been put out there. If you were here, we'd probably have to get your autograph! But thank you all. I just want to say I'm just so inspired by the work that you're doing.

MS. ROMERO: Yeah. Lisette?

MS. NIEVES: Yeah, I wanted to just say thank you to all of you. You are truly inspiring. But I think what's more important is that the earth, the land, is our collective and that you really represent the generational, age, and race, and ethnic diversity. And I appreciate that, and I see that and that's what we should be always showing when we're talking about anything related to climate change. So, thanks so much.

MS. ROMERO: Michael?

MR. SMITH: I just want to say I had a chance to visit Green City Force and meet the famous Mr. Domingo here, who talked to us about composting. And it was, Lisette, beautiful to be in the Bronx and to see such a diverse group of people working on an issue that some would say isn't for them. But we know that the issues of climate change are facing low-income communities and communities of color the hardest. And so, I want to applaud all of you for the work that you do, for your service, and thank you for showing us what AmeriCorps looks like in action.

MS. ROMERO: Absolutely. All right [to Cathy] And yourself?

MS. McLAUGHLIN: I just want to echo everything that my fellow Board members said. Again, every time we do these meetings, this is the most meaningful part of our meetings. It's the most interesting, we love to hear your stories -- and continue to share those with us, because I think that's really helpful as we go on and think about how to make this organization better and do more things to produce more folks. And I think now that we know that compost is cool [laughter] now I'm okay! So thank all of you and we're going to move on to do our open comments, if anybody wants to share anything. Thank you to everyone again, and we're going to turn this back over to the organizer. LSI will take over, and if you have

a question, we want you to have an opportunity to tell us anything that you want to share with us. We remind you we want to keep these comments to about two minutes each. And the Board will take all the comments from this section [of the meeting], and we'll follow up where appropriate. We'll respond if we have the opportunity. Just try to keep it at two minutes, so that we can all get in as many comments as we'd like.

You raise your hand -- use the "raise your hand" function -- and then we'll call on you and we'll take it from there.

CLERK: Jude -- Jason?

MR. JOHNSON: Jed Johnson.

CLERK: Sorry about that.

MR. JOHNSON: That's okay. Greetings, everyone. I hope you all can hear me.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: We can.

MR. JOHNSON: I'm not sure; can you see me as well, or?

MS. ROMERO and MS. McLAUGHLIN: No.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay; all right. Just wanted to know what parameters I was working in. But good afternoon, everybody. My name is Jed Johnson; I'm the executive director of Volunteer Louisiana and board chair for ASC, America's Service Commissions. Hello to Michael and to the entire Board. I want to thank you all for your service and passion for our mutual mission. And it's great to hear from AmeriCorps members about all their amazing work. I want to thank them all for their service. They're truly inspirational. They need to appear in front of the Labor and Education Subcommittee. [laughter] I think those stories would go a long way to showing the amazing impact that Corps members are having throughout the country.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Thank you. Did you have question?

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, I do. I have some comments.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Good.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. State service commissions are the statutory grant-making partners of the AmeriCorps agency. But as you saw outlined in the public comment that I submitted to the Board, we're concerned that state commissions are not always treated as partners. Decisions on major

initiatives continue to be made without regard to input from the field and without regard to impact on the field. We outlined a couple of specific things in the comment that I'll address briefly. But this notion of partnership, I think, is especially critical at a time like this, when funding is being threatened once again. And at a time when I think we should be all speaking with one voice, all rolling in the same direction, these ongoing challenges become an unnecessary and self-inflicted diversion.

I have calls, for example, scheduled this week with two key members of our Louisiana delegation, Representative Garret Graves and Senator Bill Cassidy. Those are the Republican co-chairs of the National Service Caucus in the House and the Senate. Unfortunately, part of the time on those calls will be spent discussing some of these ongoing partnership challenges, particularly around criminal history checks. You know, Cathy, Michael, both of you spoke about barriers to service, and that's something that's a great concern for state commissions as well. And for a decade-plus now, the field has consistently voiced to the Agency our concerns about the policies around criminal history checks -- that they have been the major contributing factor to organizations choosing to relinquish AmeriCorps funding or not applying at all, and this applies especially to small, community-based organizations.

The Agency's latest guidance is a step backwards, in our opinion. It is punitive, burdensome, does not improve public safety, and it's in direct opposition to every suggestion that we shared with the CEO back in March. So it does not feel like partnership to us. We have two other examples that we cited where we think there's room for improvement in working together with the Agency in partnership.

One is on structure. ASC did submit public comment there as well. On that issue, we recognize that the current leadership -- agency leadership -- is dealing with an inherited Transformation and Sustainability Plan that they didn't put together. But we strongly encourage them to work with the Board to revisit some of the inefficiencies imposed by the previous Administration and make some of the necessary changes that we outlined in our comments.

Finally, on modernization, we were really pleased that the Agency heard the concerns in our letter to QSMO and announced Monday that partial sub-grantee functionality will be part of the new grants management technology. And that's great news. We do hope that the AmeriCorps agency will build on that success and cultivate a true partnership that actively engages state commissions in decision making and implementation. And ASC and our state commissions avail ourselves to the Board to assist in any ways that we can to support our mutual mission of supporting and

promoting national service as a solution to our nation's most pressing problems. Thank you all.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Thank you, Jed. Any comments? Anybody want to respond? We have gotten your information, and we appreciate you sharing that with us. And as we move forward, we'll be in touch with you on how we can better work together.

Anyone?

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Thank you. Does anyone else have a question? Comment?

CLERK: Yes, we have Rachel Bruns.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Okay, go ahead, Rachel. Rachel? Rachel, are you out there?

CLERK: Rachel, you're unmuted. Okay, we'll come back to Rachel. We have Chantelle Daniels.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: All right. Welcome, Chantelle.

MS. DANIELS: Hi. Thank you. Yes. So -- I am out of Tampa, Florida, with ReDefiners World Languages and certainly appreciate all that you've done to support the communities and the initiatives that we are implementing. So my question is regarding the increased flexibility of the Segal Awards. So, I'm wondering if -- do we have a timeline for that right now? Is that something that's applicable now? My team is really excited to hear that.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: August 14.

MS. DANIELS: Okay.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: So, we're just being told by one of the staff, August 14. It's on the website. So, if you go to the website, you'll be able to read all about it.

MS. DANIELS: Wonderful. Thank you!

MS. McLAUGHLIN: You're welcome! Do I go back to Rachel, or did we lose Rachel?

CLERK: Rachel's still here. Rachel, are you there?

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Okay. We need to move to the next person.

CLERK: There are no hands raised at this time. Oh, we got one now. No? No hands raised.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Okay. We'll give it two more minutes. Rachel has been -- or whoever's logged in as Rachel -- is here.

MS. ROMERO: Yes.

CLERK: Rachel Bruns, you're unmuted.

MR. SMITH: We spent lots of time with Rachel. We'll make sure that we follow up, Rachel -- Rachel from ASC.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: All right. Thanks, Rachel. Anyone else?

CLERK: No hands raised at this time.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Okay, well --

MR. HOFFMAN: Hello? Can you hear me? I've actually raised my hand, and then raised and -- actually, I got unmuted. This is Jeff Hoffman.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Oh, Jeff. Hi, Jeff.

MR. HOFFMAN: I don't know. Maybe we're having a technology glitch, but may I address the Board?

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Sure, go ahead.

MR. HOFFMAN: So, Madame Chair, Board members, and Mr. CEO, so: Jeff Hoffman, 17-year member of the California Commission, served as chair for 5 of those -- chair of the California Volunteers Fund. And it was so exciting to see one of our Climate Action Corps fellows, as we actually put the seed funding that we raised from private sector dollars to go with the AmeriCorps dollars to create that wonderful program that we heard about.

And also, I guess, for what I'm here to talk about, a Points of Light Board member. Last week, you received a letter from Catherine Milton about the 30th anniversary to encourage you to ensure a high-profile celebration for the 30th anniversary of AmeriCorps. And our dear friend Catherine is having knee surgery as we speak and asked if I could just call in and reaffirm that. And this is what I'm doing. So. You know I'm a big fan of AmeriCorps -- I mean, Shirley, I've known you forever, it seems like, yes.

MS. SAGAWA: Forever! [laughter]

MR. HOFFMAN: Forever! And even though it came up through -- me on the Points of Light side to do on the AmeriCorps side -- I mean, we were pretty much birthed together in form. And I just think, you know, an anniversary -- after my 30 years at Disney and how we used anniversaries really more as a nod to the past, but really a focus on the future -- and when you look at issues you're facing, such as recruitment -- you know, telling stories about what we've done and with these amazing people that we heard today, is a great to hopefully get more people to join. Our challenge in convincing people -- I agreed with what one of you had said about "Get those people in front of that House Committee." So, whether state houses or local cities or et cetera. That's all a big thing. And then building prominence and then, frankly, relevance -- because I see so much of the great work that AmeriCorps does, and an anniversary is the way to wave the flag and point fingers at it.

And I was very involved with the 20th anniversary because we held the "back-end bookend" event at the Presidio. And we had our current governor at the time. I think we had, I don't know, 500 AmeriCorps members. We did all sorts of really cool stuff, and this is on the other side of what happened in D.C. over a several month period.

So, I'm really just here to endorse the letter that Catherine Milton sent and say, I'm excited about the 30th anniversary of AmeriCorps and looking forward to some great storytelling and really energizing the public about this great program. So, thank you.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Well, thank you so much, Jeff. That really means a lot. And we all are very much excited about the 30th anniversary to promote the work that we're doing and to engage folks in new and meaningful ways. So I appreciate you taking the time to call us. And give Catherine our best.

MR. SMITH: Get well soon, Catherine.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Thanks, Jeff.

MR. HOFFMAN: Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Bye, Jeff.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Bye, Jeff. Any other hands raised?

CLERK: There are no other hands at this time.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: Okay. I think on that front then, I think, in closing, I'd like to thank everybody, all the Board members who've been here today and the staff who worked so hard to pull this meeting together, and for you for joining us here today, because it's really important. The more that we get the opportunity to talk to you, the better it is.

And I'd like to say it's been an important discussion. The work that we do is important. [Looks to audience/camera] The work you do is important. And I think it's time for us ... we always have our social media. With Flor here, we always have to make sure we have all of our social media listed. [laughter] So -- is there a motion to adjourn?

MS. ROMERO: So moved.

MS. McLAUGHLIN: So moved?

MS. NIEVES: Second.

Ms. McLOUGHLIN: So, we are adjourned. Thank you so much. And thank you all for joining us. Have a great day.

MS. ROMERO: Thank you.

(Whereupon, at 3:07 p.m., the PROCEEDINGS were adjourned.)

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

I, Thomas Watson, notary public in and for the District of Columbia, do hereby certify that the forgoing PROCEEDING was duly recorded and thereafter reduced to print under my direction; that the witnesses were sworn to tell the truth under penalty of perjury; that said transcript is a true record of the testimony given by witnesses; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this proceeding was called; and, furthermore, that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

(Signature and Seal on File)

Attorney, District of Columbia BAR #41135

My Commission Expires: May 31, 2024