



To: Obama/Biden Transition USDA Review Team and Innovation and Civil Society Team

From: Joel Berg, Executive Director, New York City Coalition Against Hunger

Date: December 22, 2008

Subject: **How National Service Legislation Can Help Fight Hunger**

The New York City Coalition Against Hunger and other anti-hunger organizations benefit greatly from the service of AmeriCorps Members, but these efforts have only scratched the surface of how national service programs can be used to fight hunger and poverty.

Senators Kennedy and Hatch have introduced the Serve America Act (S. 3487), which is in line with President-elect Obama's plans to expand national service and volunteerism efforts.

While the original bill is excellent, it should be improved through amendments that more specifically authorize anti-hunger projects that:

- Provide outreach and application assistance to low-income families applying for federal nutrition assistance, tax refunds, and other anti-poverty efforts;
- Recruit, train, manage, and recognize both long and short-term anti-hunger volunteers;
- Aid food pantries, soup kitchens, food banks, food rescue organizations, and other nonprofit anti-hunger groups;
- Bolster after-school and summer meals programs;
- Provide nutrition education services;
- Distribute senior meals at congregate sites and through door-to-door delivery; and
- Expand community gardens, farmers' markets, and community supported agriculture projects.

It is also important that legislation increase the purchasing power (and end the federal taxation of) AmeriCorps education awards. See: <http://archive.ideasprimary.com/?p=334>. Increasing the value of the award would be one of the most effective ways to achieve President-elect Obama's goal of making post-secondary education affordable for Americans of all backgrounds.