



**Andy Beshear**  
GOVERNOR

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### **OP-ED – For Consideration**

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### **OP-ED: AmeriCorps and National Service: Common Ground for the Commonwealth**

*By Joe Bringardner, Executive Director, Serve Kentucky*

In a time when division dominates the headlines, national service offers rare common ground. Across Kentucky, AmeriCorps members are showing up – not for headlines, but for neighbors. They tutor students, support families, and help communities rebuild after disasters. They reflect the values that define the Commonwealth: compassion, grit, and an unwavering commitment to one another.

AmeriCorps is not your typical federal agency. It's led by Governors and State Service Commissions – local leaders who understand their communities better than any one-size-fits-all federal blueprint ever could. Federal dollars are matched by local investment, creating a powerful public-private partnership that delivers real results.

The results are clear. In 2024, more than 5,200 Kentuckians served at 700+ service sites, supporting schools, food banks, shelters, and disaster relief. That work leveraged \$33.7 million in federal funding and generated \$8.7 million in local support. Their impact is measurable – and personal:

- 69,244 children and youth supported
- 4,911 students improved in literacy and math
- 2,682 families received food assistance
- 425 individuals transitioned into safe housing

- 2,522 students received drug prevention education
- 286,000+ volunteer hours mobilized, valued at over \$8.2 million

But that impact is now under threat.

Recent budget cuts and the abrupt termination notice of 21 AmeriCorps grants by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) could eliminate up to \$9 million in federal funds, \$4.7 million in local match, and \$4.8 million in education awards. That's not just a financial hit – it's a gut punch to communities who rely on these services every day.

Despite this, Kentucky's AmeriCorps programs remain active. With full support from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Serve Kentucky is keeping programs running while a multistate lawsuit challenges these terminations in federal court. The stakes are too high to do otherwise.

As Governor Andy Beshear said, "Kentucky's AmeriCorps members are on the frontlines of our most pressing challenges – supporting students, helping families stay housed, and strengthening communities. We're proud to defend these programs and the Kentuckians who make them work."

AmeriCorps is not partisan – it's patriotic. From 18-year-olds just starting out to retirees in their 80s, members come from all walks of life. Their service is voluntary, but the return on investment is undeniable. Since 1994, Kentucky has received \$66 million in education awards, helping over 17,000 Kentuckians afford college or pay off student debt.

National service doesn't just help others – it prepares the next generation of workers and leaders. Members gain hands-on experience in education, public health, housing, and disaster response. Many go on to careers in the very communities they served.

When disaster strikes, AmeriCorps is there. Thanks to our agreement with the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), Kentucky could quickly deploy trained young adults for full-time, boots-on-the-ground service. NCCC members have helped rebuild homes, deliver emergency supplies, and restore hope.

The sudden defunding of AmeriCorps programs doesn't just threaten services – it damages trust. These decisions, made without warning or transparency, undercut decades of partnership. We've had to divert resources, delay funding, and reassess how to serve the people of Kentucky.

As CHFS Secretary Eric Friedlander said, "This is about more than funding – it's about preserving essential services that Kentuckians depend on every day. Life-saving programs are being needlessly and carelessly gutted."

We cannot allow decades of progress to be dismantled in a matter of weeks.

AmeriCorps works. We see it in students gaining confidence, seniors finding connection, and communities growing stronger. Kentuckians are stepping up to serve. We owe it to them – and to our future – to protect and preserve this vital institution.

This is about service. It's about community. It's about common ground for the Commonwealth.

**AmeriCorps brings out the best of America – let's not let it disappear.**

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Information on how the state is working to improve the lives and health of our people is available at [CHFS.ky.gov](https://CHFS.ky.gov). Follow the cabinet on [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).