

**Rep. Billy Long (MO-7) Member's Day Testimony for the Record**  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Educations, and Related Agencies  
Wednesday, March 1, 2017

**Opening**

Good morning Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for allowing me to come before this Subcommittee today to speak in support of AmeriCorps.

On Sunday, May 22, 2011, a devastating EF-5 tornado swept through my district in the town of Joplin, Missouri. The tornado killed 161 people, injured over 1,000, and destroyed over 7,000 homes and businesses. With a population of more than 50,000 and a population density near 1,500 per square mile, the tornado affected a considerable part of the city. The tornado tore a path 22.1 miles long, six miles of it measuring EF-4 or EF-5 all of which in Joplin. It resulted in the greatest death toll from a single tornado in six decades; eight worst in recorded U.S. history

I will never forget this catastrophic event and I'm here today to testify to this Subcommittee how AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) resources helped my Congressional District recover.

*\*Personal story from Rep. Long regarding the Joplin tornado*

**AmeriCorps**

As many of you know, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is an independent federal agency and one of its largest programs is AmeriCorps. CNCS acts much like a foundation and is the nation's largest grantmaker investing in locally driven service and volunteering efforts focused on several high-priority areas including disaster relief.

CNCS funds more than 3,000 organizations and is constantly expanding their reach and impact. The results of this investment are more engaged citizens, greater economic opportunity, less dependence on government, and stronger communities.

*National service has a strong, bipartisan history.*

National service is a historically bipartisan, politically popular, and cost-effective strategy for engaging citizens, strengthening communities, creating jobs, and uniting the nation. Over the past eight decades, presidents from both political parties have proposed, and created with Congress, programs that have enabled Americans to serve local communities for a significant period of time.

*National service helps local leaders solve community challenges.*

Through participation in AmeriCorps, national service members help communities recover after natural disasters (like Joplin, MO).

*National service is extremely cost-effective.*

In 2015, CNCS generated \$1.26 billion in outside resources from private businesses, foundations, and other sources - an amount exceeding the federal appropriation. Every federal dollar invested in AmeriCorps is matched by more than two dollars from donations and in-kind support from non-CNCS sources, including business and philanthropy. For every one dollar the federal government invests in national service, there is a nearly four dollar return on investment. Federal agencies can utilize national service corps members to perform duties that align with agency missions at a low cost, like FEMA Corps, which is estimated to save \$60 million annually.

### **Joplin, MO and AmeriCorps**

AmeriCorps members and volunteers were indispensable to the recovery efforts after the nation's deadliest tornado in nearly 60 years ripped through Joplin, Missouri.

Within hours after the tornado struck, AmeriCorps members arrived in Joplin to begin working with local authorities assisting in every way possible. They established a missing person's hotline, removed tons of debris, provided homeowner assistance and casework, operated donation and distribution warehouses, coordinated donations, and managed a large-scale volunteer operation.

I would like to share some "fast facts" about AmeriCorps and the Joplin Tornado:

- 359 AmeriCorps Members served in Joplin
- 76,879 Hours served by AmeriCorps Members
- 75,786 Volunteers coordinated through AmeriCorps Recovery Center
- 520,102 Volunteer hours reported by AmeriCorps Recovery Center
- 2,222 Volunteer groups registered
- 2,226 Completed homeowner requests
- 6,053 Damage or needs assessments completed
- 20,000 Meals served in disaster areas
- 732 Homes mucked and/or gutted
- 129,479 Total volunteers (includes volunteers serving through other groups)

- 798,623 Total volunteer hours (includes volunteers serving through other groups)

In addition to all of this, Joplin city officials reported that the city received donated resources and volunteer hours totaling \$17.7 million dollars. AmeriCorps members were instrumental to coordinating this influx of volunteers and donations, which efficiently aided their recovery and saved the city more than \$17.7 million dollars in disaster costs.

As you can see, the impact AmeriCorps members and volunteers had in my Congressional District after this devastating tornado were indispensable to the recovery efforts in Joplin, MO.

### **Conclusion**

Again, I appreciate the Committee's continued willingness to listen to the views of Members like myself. I know the full Appropriations Committee will face some tough decisions on spending priorities. For this reason, I respectfully ask for support of continued level federal funding to AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National and Community Service.