

AmeriCorps Receives the Bush Administration Photo-op Treatment

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Washington, DC - As National Volunteer Week concluded, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) expressed disbelief that President Bush would praise the volunteer work of the same program — AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (AmeriCorps*NCCC) — he has recommended for elimination in his proposed budget. During the President's trip to Biloxi, Mississippi yesterday he praised Hands On Network, an organization that is currently benefiting from the work and volunteer efforts of AmeriCorps*NCCC team members.

"There was an unfortunate irony to the President's visit to Biloxi. We've seen this before, but in this case, his Administration is not just shortchanging the program, it is shutting it down," stated Congresswoman Matsui.

"AmeriCorps*NCCC volunteers were deployed to New Orleans and Mississippi within 24 hours after Hurricane Katrina hit. Every participant in the NCCC program since that terrible event has performed volunteer service in the devastated region. At present, more than 700 NCCC volunteers are working there. These people are working hard and making a difference. The President was right to promote the efforts of these and other volunteers yesterday.

"But the President needs to demonstrate his support for public service with not just words and rhetoric, but deeds and resources. This support cannot just be when the cameras are on, but behind the scenes and, especially, in his budget."

AmeriCorps*NCCC members have played an integral role in our communities and in the hurricane clean-up and recovery efforts.

Within 24 hours of Hurricane Katrina making landfall, AmeriCorps*NCCC members were deployed and continue to aid in the Gulf Coast recovery effort. In total, nearly 1,600 team members have provided 320,000 hours of volunteer service valued at more than \$5.8 million. They have assisted 1,063,000 people, distributed 1,714 tons of food, and supported 542 emergency response centers. And equally important, NCCC members are coordinating other volunteers. Altogether, NCCC members have coordinated the work of more than 7,715 other volunteers.

Congresswoman Matsui has led the charge to ensure that the AmeriCorps*NCCC program has the necessary funding to continue to benefit communities nationwide. In addition to meeting with Administration officials, she sent a letter to the Budget and Appropriations Committee calling for the program to be fully funded at \$25.5 million. This letter also received the bi-partisan support of 51 other Members of Congress.

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