

fewer and fewer of my congressional colleagues know from experience the realities of military life. The decline of the citizen-soldier is not healthy for a democracy. While it is not currently politically practical to revive the draft, it is important to find better incentives and opportunities for more young Americans to choose service in the military, if not for a career, then at least for a limited period of time.

For example, an important responsibility of our armed services is peacekeeping around the world. Often, this involves non-military activities such as constabulary work. The military should explore

whether short-term enlistees could fulfill these responsibilities, freeing other personnel to perform more traditional military duties.

We should also undertake a campaign to revive Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) on college campuses across the country. On many campuses, ROTC was expelled as a result of protests during the Vietnam War. One result has been an ever-declining number of college graduates choosing military service as a career. Congress should consider linking financial aid to the willingness of colleges to allow ROTC back on campus. It is truly outrageous that some colleges receive federal aid while forbid-

Keeping the Faith

By Steve Waldman

PRESIDENT BUSH ON MAY 21, went to the campus of Notre Dame University to unveil his beloved "faith-based initiative" to give federal support to religious organization that deliver services to the needy. Curiously, Notre Dame was also the site of Bill Clinton's first major speech about his "pet idea"—national service. In 1991, as he campaigned for president, it was here that he laid out his vision for a program that would enable young people to perform community service in exchange for college aid, an idea that later became a new program, AmeriCorps.

This is more than just an historical coincidence. In many faiths, including Catholicism, service and belief in God are linked. That's certainly the case at Notre Dame. Indeed, upon graduating, some 60 graduating seniors annually enlist in a university-run program called the Alliance for Catholic Education. The program trains these students as teachers and places them for two-year stints in parochial schools throughout the South, in return for small stipends and help paying off their college loans. It would be hard

to think of a faith-based effort that would be more appealing to the education-minded Bush. But here's the irony: The program is partly paid for by AmeriCorps.

It's now become clear that the key to making Bush's pet idea succeed is to make Clinton's pet idea bigger.

When President Bush offered his plans for promoting faith-based charity soon after taking office, he mentioned three initiatives. First, he promised to change the tax code to give charitable deductions to those who don't itemize their tax returns—a great idea, but one he quickly abandoned so he would still have enough money for the rest of his tax cut.

Second, he proposed giving grants to religious groups to help them do good works. Some variant of this idea could still become law but in a far more modest form, thanks to opposition from liberals fearful of church-state problems and conservatives fearful of government manipulation of religion.

Third, Bush suggested (somewhat to the surprise of other Republicans who had become accustomed to attacking AmeriCorps) that national service should also be part of the mix.

Now that the prospects for the first two proposals have dimmed, it falls to the third—national ser-

vice—to carry through the faith-based initiative. And that's a good thing, because AmeriCorps is in many ways the perfect vehicle to promote faith-based action.

When I worked at the Corporation for National Service in 1995—as senior advisor to the CEO Harris Wofford—I was surprised to learn how many AmeriCorps members were quietly working with faith-based groups. And the marriage between AmeriCorps and religious groups has only grown since then. Currently about 6,000 of AmeriCorps' 50,000 members work in faith-based groups, from the National Jewish Coalition for Literacy, to Lutheran Services in America, to the Christ House homeless shelter.

There was a certain amount of suspicion among faith groups when AmeriCorps first started making its members available to help. Millard Fuller, founder of Habitat for Humanity, originally turned down AmeriCorps' offer, fearful of government entanglement. But he was overruled by his board and is glad that he was. Habitat is now one of the largest AmeriCorps programs, employing several hundred members, most of whom recruit and train other volunteers. Fuller says that thousands of homes Habitat builds for low-income Americans could not have been built without

ding access to an organization that promotes the defense of our freedoms.

In America, our rights come before our duties, as well they should. We are a free people, and among our freedoms is the liberty to care or not care for our birthright. But those who claim their liberty but not their duty to the civilization that ensures it live a half-life, indulging their self-interest at the cost of their self-respect. The richest men and women possess nothing of real value if their lives have no greater object than themselves.

Success, wealth, celebrity gained and kept for private interest—these are small things. They make

us comfortable, ease the way for our children, and purchase a fleeting regard for our lives, but not the self-respect that, in the end, matters most. Sacrifice for a cause greater than self-interest, however, and you invest your life with the eminence of that cause.

Americans did not fight and win World War II as discrete individuals. Their brave and determined energies were mobilized and empowered by a national government headed by democratically elected leaders. That is how a free society remains free and achieves greatness. National service is a crucial means of making our patriotism real, to the benefit of both ourselves and our country. ●

the help of these AmeriCorps members.

Habitat has become so mainstream, we might forget that it has a religious core. Its official mission statement reads: "Habitat's ministry is based on the conviction that to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ we must reflect Christ's love in our own lives by loving and caring for one another." Yet while I worked at the Corporation I heard not a single reported complaint about the AmeriCorps members' role in any faith-based group. At Habitat sites, for instance, members are given the choice of whether they want to participate in the pre-work prayers; if they do, they do so as private citizens.

Because AmeriCorps aid goes to an individual rather than a program, it becomes akin to Pell Grants or student loans. It is perfectly constitutional for a 20-year-old to use a Pell Grant to go to Catholic seminary. It is viewed as constitutional because the aid is going to the student not to the school (even though the school clearly benefits).

Another reason AmeriCorps is a particularly good fit with the faith-based initiative relates to red tape. One of the chief complaints about the Bush administration's proposal to give government grants to faith-based organizations is that the

money will come with all kinds of mandates and accounting requirements that might alter the religious nature of the organizations that accept it. With AmeriCorps, however, accountability questions are simpler to answer. For the most part, the government wants to know what the AmeriCorps member is doing, rather than what the group as a whole is doing. To a great extent, it doesn't matter how much of Habitat's budget goes to administrative overhead or overseas missions or salaries. What matters is that the AmeriCorps member is working hard and accomplishing something.

AmeriCorps is especially easy on the little guy. Bush administration officials have said they want to devise a program that can help small church-based programs, not just national charities. But little churches or charities have a hard time participating in grant programs. If you have only a minister and a volunteer secretary, it's not likely you'll be able to write grant proposals, keep evaluation records, and prepare audits. But service programs can be structured so that all the program has to do is welcome in an idealistic young person, put her to work, and keep track of what she does.

Imagine if there were a special core of AmeriCorps members specifically tasked to help small

houses of worship and religious group? The impact could be far greater than if we forced these little churches to try to apply for government grants.

There are encouraging signs that the Bush administration understands the potential role of AmeriCorps. Bush, after all, appointed his close ally, former Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith, to be both chairman of the Corporation for National Service, which administers AmeriCorps, and a key player in the faith-based initiative. And before he left as head of the White House's faith-based initiative office, John DiIulio placed two of his top aides at the Corporation for National Service.

The only problem is that, so far, Bush has been timid in his use of AmeriCorps, neither increasing nor decreasing the size of the program. But now other aspects of his faith-based initiative are running into roadblocks. If the president wants his signature program, the faith-based initiative to be significant, as he has repeatedly pledged, his best option may be to dramatically increase the size and funding of Clinton's signature program, AmeriCorps. God works in mysterious ways.

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EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO **TERRORISM** SELF-STUDY



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