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Celebrating the Strength of Black Workers

It has become a tradition during Black History Month to celebrate and honor the rich legacy of African Americans and the many contributions blacks have made to our nation. We regularly pay tribute to Martin, Rosa, and Malcolm, as well as to DuBois, Douglass, and Garvey. But there are many unsung heroes whose contributions we either don't celebrate or give short shrift. These courageous heroes and heroines deserve our attention and our respect—and they deserve to hold their special place in history.

One such hero is A. Philip Randolph, the founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. When Randolph organized the Brotherhood in 1925, he became the first black man to head a national union. He was the founder and organizer of the Negro American Labor Council. Known as the elder statesman of black labor leaders, Randolph rose through the ranks of the labor movement to become the first black vice president of the AFL-CIO.

Like Martin Luther King, Jr., Randolph dedicated his life to the pursuit of justice and equality. His acceptance of the stewardship of the Brotherhood launched him on a lifelong quest to also secure economic opportunity for African Americans. Randolph understood the inextricable relationship between getting fair and equitable treatment in the workforce and realizing the American dream.

Under Randolph, the Brotherhood union became the strongest black labor group in the labor movement and a potent force in the U.S. generally. Although railroad management bitterly fought Randolph at every stage, he never compromised his principles or the struggle to permanently establish fair employment practices. Many gains African Americans enjoy today in the areas of working conditions and civil rights were pioneered by Randolph and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

In 1940, continuing his crusade for economic opportunity nationwide, Randolph met with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, along with Walter White of the NAACP, to press for the integration of the military and equal access to defense industry jobs for black workers. When Roosevelt resisted, Randolph prepared to mobilize a massive march of workers at Washington's Lincoln Memorial. By June, 1941, a month before the planned event, the number of expected marchers had grown close to 100,000. Faced with the embarrassing prospect of so many American workers marching for their rights while the United States waged a war against tyranny abroad, Roosevelt relented. He summoned Randolph to the White House and promised that he would sign an executive order banning discrimination in the defense industries and the federal government if Randolph called off the march. Randolph agreed, and FDR signed Executive Order 8802, which banned discrimination in these industries and created the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to oversee enforcement of the order.

But the armed forces still remained segregated. Randolph kept up the pressure on the federal government, particularly after President Harry S. Truman instituted a peace-time

draft. Randolph urged black men to practice nonviolent civil disobedience by refusing to enlist or to serve if drafted. In 1948, Truman finally signed Executive Order 9981 ending segregation in the armed forces.

More than two decades after he first proposed the idea of a mass march on Washington to secure equal access to jobs and the economy, at age 74 Randolph helped to organize and lead the now famous 1963 March on Washington that was so instrumental in pressuring Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act that year and the voting rights act of 1965. Let's salute A. Philip Randolph for his tireless fight to improve working conditions, raise working wages, and gain equal rights for all Americans. I do so quite often when I pass his imposing statue in Washington's Union Station. ■

PRESIDENT



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AmeriCorps—Adversity and Success

Clinton's Domestic Peace Corps Has Proven Its Value and Converted Its Critics

by Wiley A. Hall III

When President Bill Clinton launched AmeriCorps—his plan for a domestic Peace Corps that would turn national service into a rite of passage for young Americans—the project quickly came to symbolize the partisan bickering in Washington. Then-House Speaker Newt Gingrich dismissed it as “gimmickry.” Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) described it as a “Great Society-style boondoggle.” Even some liberals expressed concern that Clinton’s proposal to pay “volunteers” for their service might undercut the very spirit of volunteering. Throughout the first two years of its existence, AmeriCorps was targeted for elimination by conservatives who also sneered at the idea of national service being championed by a president who had avoided service during the Vietnam War.

But over the last six years, AmeriCorps has proven its value both to the nation and to the volunteers who fill its ranks. Congress has just approved \$767 million for national service for fiscal year 2001, an increase of about \$35 million over last year and the fourth straight year the once skeptical body has increased its budget. Last fall, 49 of the nation’s 50 governors (including then-Texas Governor George W. Bush) urged Congress to reauthorize the program for another five years. Secretary of State Colin Powell has described AmeriCorps as “a tremendous investment in young people, a tremendous investment in our future.”

Shrewd politicking certainly accounts for part of the turnaround in people’s attitudes toward the program. For liberals, AmeriCorps harks back to the idealism with which President John F. Kennedy launched the Peace Corps and to his call to citizens to “ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

For conservatives, the program embodies President George Herbert Walker Bush’s vision of problems being addressed by a network of community-based volunteers rather than by big government, what he called a “nation of communities . . . a brilliant diversity spread like stars, like a thousand points of light.”

But the most important factor behind the bipartisan support for AmeriCorps is its proven track record. Since 1994, nearly 200,000 men and women have served in AmeriCorps, providing assistance to 33 million people in 4,000 communities. Members have tutored and mentored more than four million children, provided after-school care for more than one million at-risk youth, helped build more than 11,000 homes, and helped communities rebuild after natural disasters in more than 30 states. This year, AmeriCorps hopes to deploy 50,000 volunteers—its largest class ever.

The program works this way: In exchange for 10 months of intensive service, members receive a \$4,725 scholarship that can be used to pay for college or training or to help repay student loans. Two-thirds of AmeriCorps funds are administered by commissions appointed by the governor of each state. The remainder is administered by national nonprofit organizations. AmeriCorps members serve with organizations such as the American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, and the YMCA. They also serve with faith-based groups such as the Sisters of Notre Dame and the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service.

Although some critics initially feared the government’s intrusion into volunteer work, they now consider AmeriCorps a boon to their efforts. “Instead of distorting the mission of the civic sector, AmeriCorps has proved to be a source of new power and energy for nonprofit organizations across the country,” wrote former U.S. Senator Dan Coats of Indiana, president of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America in an op-ed published in *The Hill*, a Washington-based news tabloid.

AmeriCorps is one of three major initiatives administered by the Corporation for National Service. The corporation also administers Learn and Serve America, which helps support nearly one million students from kindergarten through college who are meeting community needs while improving their academic skills and learning the habits of good citizenship; and the National Senior Service Corps, which mobilizes nearly half a million Americans age 55 and older. The Corporation for National Service works with state commissions, appointed by the governor of each state, nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, schools and other organizations to define local national service priorities.

There are three components to the AmeriCorps program: AmeriCorps proper, AmeriCorps*VISTA, and AmeriCorps*NCCC (the organization uses a joined asterisk to remind the public that VISTA and NCCC are no longer independent programs). AmeriCorps proper, often referred to as “the domestic Peace Corps,” has members who serve with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and the American Red Cross. These AmeriCorps members train volunteers, tutor and mentor at-risk youth, build affordable housing, clean up rivers and streams, work with senior citizens, provide emergency and long-term assistance to disaster victims, and meet other community needs.

AmeriCorps*VISTA is the successor to Volunteers In Service to America, a program that was established 30 years ago. AmeriCorps*VISTA programs focus on issues relating to poverty. The volunteers in these programs work full time,

Wiley A. Hall III is a journalist in Baltimore.

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AmeriCorps

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live in the communities they serve, and strive to build programs that can continue after AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteers have gone. AmeriCorps*NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) is a 10-month, full time, residential service program for men and women ages 18 to 24. Members focus on critical needs such as education, public safety, and the environment. Overall, the AmeriCorps program has had a significant impact in several critical areas, which can be felt in communities across the country.

Measurable Results

Improving childhood literacy. More than half of all AmeriCorps members work to improve the lives of children and youth by teaching, tutoring, mentoring, and running after-school programs. Nationwide, AmeriCorps members and the volunteers they recruit provide tutoring each year to more than 100,000 children in the first, second, and third grades. A study released by the White House last October reported that children tutored by AmeriCorps members showed “significant gains in reading performance at all grade levels.”

In Washington, the Washington Reading Corps has more than 300 AmeriCorps members helping to boost the reading scores of struggling elementary school students in low performing schools. After the first year, the average proportion of fourth graders that met the state standard rose 11 percent in Reading Corps schools, compared with a six percent rise in schools statewide. In Alabama, 12 AmeriCorps members recruited and placed more than 1,300 volunteer tutors in schools where they worked with students, in kindergarten through third grade. Seventy percent of those students showed significant improvement in their basic understanding and comprehension skills.

Helping communities rebuild after disasters. From tornadoes and forest fires to floods and hurricanes, AmeriCorps members have responded to natural disasters in more than 30 states in the past five years. For example, after Hurricane Georges hit Puerto Rico and the southern United States in September 1998, nearly 700 AmeriCorps members worked with the Red Cross to run emergency shelters, remove downed trees, and help families repair and rebuild. When Grand Forks, North Dakota, suffered a devastating flood and an equally devastating fire in April 1997, members of two AmeriCorps*NCCC teams helped the residents rebuild and restore their homes.

Building homes. More than 600 AmeriCorps members serve with local chapters of Habitat for Humanity, where they build homes and recruit, train, and supervise volunteers. More than 1,372 Habitat homes have been built as the direct result of the AmeriCorps program, and more than 177,000 Habitat volunteers have been supervised by AmeriCorps members. Millard Fuller, Habitat’s founder, was skeptical at first about the advisability of the government paying “volunteers” to serve their community. Today, Fuller is one of the program’s biggest cheerleaders.

Tom Jones, director of the Washington office of Habitat for Humanity, said during testimony before Congress in February 2000 that Habitat’s only criticism of the AmeriCorps program today is that there are not enough members to go around. “We have 1,530 affiliates across the United States, each with its own local board, and each one of these is now clamoring, ‘How can we get involved?’ ‘How can we have AmeriCorps, and Senior Corps and VISTA workers doing it with us?’ The potential is unlimited.”

Bridging the digital divide. In partnership with IBM and United Way, AmeriCorps*VISTA members are helping nonprofit organizations in nine cities use computer technology to improve services to low-income communities. In Detroit, 40 nonprofit agencies received technical training and new computers from IBM while VISTA generated \$200,000 worth of recycled computer equipment for one agency alone. In Atlanta, 12 Project FIRST AmeriCorps members provided 1,300 hours of computer training to 200 Atlanta public school teachers, provided another 600 hours of computer training to 2,500 students, set up computer labs at 12 schools, and refurbished IBM computers that had been donated by the company to 27 parents who had successfully completed the training.

Protecting the environment. In Baltimore, nine AmeriCorps members reduced lead poisoning risks in 60 homes by stabilizing deteriorating paint, fixing building components, and removing lead dust. Through their efforts, 75 children now live in homes with reduced exposure to lead poisoning. Last year, members with the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship completed 12,300 groundwater assessments and created stewardship teams in 38 counties. The teams identified local needs, coordinated water protection efforts, and reached out to more than 900 farmers, 7,500 homeowners, and 12,500 students, and distributed resource directories to 20,000 families.

Building on a Long Tradition

Building on a long tradition, the Corporation merged the work and staff of two predecessor agencies, ACTION and the Commission on National and Community Service. For two decades, ACTION had administered VISTA and the three programs that make up the Senior Corps—the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Senior Companions, and Foster Grandparents—which engage nearly a half million older Americans in service.

The rapidly expanding grassroots service movement led to the passage of the National and Community Service Act of 1990. This legislation, signed by President Bush, created both a private nonprofit organization—the Points of Light Foundation—and a new independent federal agency, the Commission on National and Community Service. Through grants and national coordination, the commission supported four streams of service: service-learning programs for school-aged youth, higher education service programs, youth corps, and national service demonstration models. In 1992, a bipartisan group of senators, working with the Bush administration, drafted legislation to create the NCCC as a

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A Tale of Three Cities

New Police Strategies May Be Making Black Communities Safer

by Paul Ruffins

New York City has enjoyed a steep drop in crime in recent years. But according to former New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton, the sad fact is that this has not brought about a dramatic improvement in the relationship between the black community and the police. Bratton is not alone in feeling that we should celebrate the fact that the streets of black neighborhoods are safer than they have been in several decades, and it is not only New York where things have improved.

The nation has seen a steep reduction in crime over the past decade, particularly among young people. In December 2000, the Justice Department reported that the 1999 homicide arrest rate for juveniles was down 68 percent from its 1993 peak. FBI statistics show that the combined juvenile arrest rates for four major violent crimes—murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—plunged 36 percent between 1994 and 1999. Perhaps most impressive, according to James Alan Fox of Northeastern University, the rate for murders committed by black youths (between the ages of 14 and 17) fell by 73 percent, bringing a similar reduction in black murder victims.

Despite these encouraging developments, there has been little public discussion of the role that better police management has played in crime reduction. There are several reasons for this. First, increased police activity often brings negative as well as positive results, and tragedies such as the shooting of Amadou Diallo in New York City have stoked the black community's ongoing fear of the police.

A second reason is that changes in police tactics have been obscured by simultaneous changes in many of the other factors said to impact violence. The economy is often cited as intricately connected with crime trends, and during this period our economy has gone through its longest expansion in history, producing low unemployment of less than 4.0 percent overall and 7.6 percent among African Americans. A third reason is that mayors and police chiefs generally don't like to call attention to their management tactics, because doing so means that they can be held responsible by voters if crime does go back up.

But perhaps the greatest reason police tactics have been downplayed in policy debates is that for many years neither liberals nor conservatives really believed that police departments per se could play a significant role in reducing crime. A traditional liberal argument has held that little could be done about crime until poverty was eliminated, drugs use was reduced, and guns were better controlled. Many conservatives have blamed the staggering increase in crime since

the mid-1980s on the rise in fatherless families and the "moral breakdown" of society. William Bennett is among those who popularized the term "juvenile super-predators" to describe a generation of young people so violent they could not be deterred by police but only disabled through long periods of incarceration.

During the Nixon era, many conservatives called for "unhandcuffing" the local police to restore law and order. But more recent conservative rhetoric about getting tough on crime has largely focused on sentencing legislation, including the death penalty, the three-strikes law, mandatory minimums, and the abolitions of parole. Interestingly enough, it took a liberal black mayor, David Dinkins of New York City, to prove that changing police tactics could reduce crime. "We must reaffirm the rule of law," he announced, "and fight back against the pushers and muggers and take back our streets and subways and our parks." One way Dinkins turned crime around was by hiring many more officers, but more important, he broke with tradition and chose two brilliant police managers from outside of NYPD's ranks. Lee Brown, an African American who helped pioneer community policing in Houston, became head of the NYPD. William Bratton of Boston was appointed head of the New York City Transit Police, which at the time was a separate department. Because of changes in tactics that these two introduced, crime decreased 9 percent in New York City between 1990 and 1993. This was a period when violence was still peaking nationwide, and before New York's economy began its strong recovery. As Bratton later observed, the biggest change was that police performance was finally being measured by how much the department reduced crime rather than how fast officers responded to 911 calls or how many people they arrested.

African Americans should welcome the idea that improved police tactics can decrease crime. Unlike sentencing laws or capital punishment, which are imposed by federal or state legislators, local police tactics are more subject to the political control of black voters, elected officials, and police chiefs. Secondly, if one completely accepts the traditional liberal view that crime is primarily a result of economic conditions, this means that African American communities are doomed to another wave of bloodshed if or when the economy goes into recession.

Given that police tactics can make a difference, there is much to be learned by looking at the various trade-offs involved in three communities that have taken very different approaches to reducing crime: New York City, Richmond, Virginia, and Boston, Massachusetts.

Paul Ruffins is a contributing writer for *Washington CityPaper* and a former editor of the NAACP's *Crisis*.

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New York City

In New York, crime in the subway started going down faster than crime in the streets, dropping 22 percent between 1990 and 1993 when violence was still rising in many other big cities. In addition to trying to improve the reliability of the trains and the cleanliness of the stations, the city also began to do a better job of keeping order. One of the Transit Police's first moves was apprehending people who beat the subway fare by simply jumping over the turnstiles or running through the exit gates. Though it wasn't a serious crime, Bratton put a stop to it because public opinion polls showed that jumpers infuriated honest riders who had waited in long lines to pay their fares.

The police were shocked to discover that many jumpers committed this obvious crime while carrying weapons or drugs. Fully one in seven already had outstanding arrest warrants. Most fare jumping wasn't an act of economic necessity but a gesture of impulsive social aggression that often correlated with much more dangerous behavior. After being charged with carrying weapons or drugs, many jumpers were put behind bars or decided to cooperate and provide information leading to other arrests.

The NYPD then took this approach of "zero tolerance" for "quality of life crimes" in the subways and applied it above-ground, stopping, questioning, and sometimes searching people for minor infractions, such as drinking beer in public. The success of this strategy, which became much more aggressive after Rudy Giuliani became mayor, can be seen to validate James Q. Wilson's "broken windows" theory, which posits that small crimes, such as graffiti, lead to bigger crimes, because they show that neither the community nor the authorities are in control of the streets. There may also be a simpler explanation: getting searched more often may discourage troublemakers from carrying the handguns that often turn mere arguments into shootings.

From a law enforcement perspective, the New York City of the 1990s can be described as a moderately violent city with strict gun control. It is also a place where most young people don't have cars. Therefore, most police interactions there involve pedestrians in neighborhoods, a situation that seems to be less volatile than stopping drivers in cars. Zero tolerance can be considered a high-contact, low-punishment, high-risk, high-return approach. It drastically increases the chances of an interaction between citizens and the police, which is stressful for both sides and increases the risk of humiliation, brutality, and excessive force. Zero tolerance is probably not a strategy that most black citizens would have chosen on their own. However, it is not primarily based on longer prison sentences, and it has yielded a steep reduction in the number of young black and Hispanic men killed or wounded. In New York's most dangerous neighborhoods, between 1993 and 1997, homicides dropped by about 60 percent.

The Richmond Experiment

Richmond, Virginia, is unlike New York City in many ways. It is a small city that is majority black, where most young people have access to cars, and it is situated in a pro-gun state. It is also a very violent place. In 1996, its 140 homicides represented a murder rate twice as high as Philadelphia's and five times higher than New York's. Richmond's new policing strategy—the "Richmond Experiment"—can be considered a Southern strategy. Built on the fact that a small number of repeat criminals commit a disproportionate number of crimes, it involves vigorously enforcing the federal gun laws that make it a felony for any convicted felon to simply possess a firearm or sometimes even ammunition.

Until recently, these statutes were widely disregarded by local courts. But in Richmond, every felon caught with a gun is prosecuted in federal court, and a five-year sentence for the gun possession alone is common. There are several advantages. It shifts the court and penal costs to the federal government, and most felons charged with federal crimes are not eligible for bail or parole. This approach has been generally well received by Richmond's black community because it seems to have produced a dramatic decrease in violence. After it was introduced in 1997, accompanied by a widespread publicity campaign, homicides declined 36 percent in one year. If the downside of the New York approach is increased contacts and searches, the disadvantage of the Richmond strategy is that many young black criminals are spending much more time in jail. Its advantage over the New York approach is that it is a low-contact, high-punishment, low-risk, high-return approach that does not increase the number of interactions between honest citizens and the police.

The Boston "Ten Point" Plan

On July 10, 1997, Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts wrote, "Today marks exactly two years since any juvenile has been killed in a firearm homicide in Boston." Kennedy was referring to a remarkably successful church/community/police partnership that could be considered the liberal alternative to the Richmond Experiment.

The "Ten Point Coalition" was developed with the leadership of the Reverend Eugene Rivers and represents a successful attempt to make the best of two tragedies. The first tragedy was the infamous 1989 murder case in which Charles Stuart, a white man, killed his pregnant wife and blamed a black carjacker, setting in motion a witch-hunt. Boston police harassed hundreds of black men in their search for the nonexistent black criminal, underscoring long-standing complaints about racial profiling. On the other hand, in 1992, several black teenagers rushed into the Morningstar Baptist Church during a funeral service and stabbed another teenager who had been a member of a rival gang. This awakened many black clergy members to the need to take vigorous action against crime.

The essence of Boston's program, which started in 1991, is that black churches have been helping to direct the

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Restoring the Faith of Voters

In the Wake of the 2000 Elections, the House Democratic Caucus Special Committee on Election Reform Is Taking Action

by Congresswoman Maxine Waters

On February 14, Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) announced that she will serve as the chair of the Democratic Caucus Special Committee on Election Reform. Rep. Waters wrote the following article especially for Focus magazine to clarify the nature and purpose of this electoral reform effort.

The Democratic Caucus Special Committee on Election Reform has been formed to address widely reported irregularities and dysfunction in many of the nation's voting jurisdictions. The emerging statistical snapshot of the November election indicates that the vast majority of voters experienced problem-free balloting. Nevertheless, an extensive record of voting irregularities, including the effective disenfranchisement of thousands of voters, has also emerged. From 2.1 to 2.8 million votes cast in the November election were not counted.

It will be the task of the Special Committee on Election Reform to learn about these reports, conduct hearings and town hall meetings throughout the nation, and develop resolutions to these problems in partnership with the voters themselves. We will report back to the Democratic Caucus with recommendations. The scope of the Committee's work, however, is not limited to the events of November 2000. The often confusing patchwork that describes the administration of elections around the country took decades to evolve. Many state and local election boards are in need of modernization.

Florida election difficulties remain etched in the memory of millions of Americans, yet election problems were not limited to a particular state or jurisdiction. Among the irregularities reported in Louisiana were incompatible lists of voters compiled by local election boards and the state's department of motor vehicles. In Maine, many voters were improperly purged from voter rolls. In Virginia, voters reported being asked for multiple identification documents.

Thousands of voters across the country were turned away from polling places. Additional thousands encountered voting machines incapable of properly recording their voting preferences. Initial surveys of the election indicate that these obstacles to voting were experienced disproportionately in minority and low-income communities.

Not only did the African American voter turnout defy voting trends, but the experiences encountered by African

Americans in November reflected the best and the worst of the election day experiences reported by voters from all racial and ethnic population groups. Despite a historic turnout, initial surveys have revealed that ballots cast in largely African American precincts in Florida were invalidated at rates higher than invalidation rates in mostly white neighborhoods. Ballots in precincts with high poverty levels were more likely to be discarded than those in more affluent precincts. Early studies also indicate that voters in precincts with lower educational attainment experienced ballot invalidation at higher rates than other precincts. These are legitimate issues of concern to poor and minority communities nationally.

The national elections of November 2000 included the closest Presidential contest in the nation's history. The delayed decision in that contest was determined by a split vote of the U.S. Supreme Court. In the aftermath, a veritable storm of concerned voters was unusually vocal and visible in expressions of elation or dismay with the election results. Common to these expressions of disappointment or gratification, however, were observations that the existing patchwork of election procedures and systems around the country is in need of repair.

In order for us to make a series of recommendations that reflect the full range of concerns expressed by thousands of voters, these and any other election-related issues can become subjects for the Special Committee on Election Reform to scrutinize. The numerous state and county commissions that have begun to study their own election methods will also be consulted. Their work and that of advocacy organizations who responded with urgency to the complaints of voters in November will be instructive to the conclusions reached by the Special Committee.

Due to the constitutional sensitivity of the franchise, there is a need for unqualified confidence in the election process. Therefore, we will act to restore the faith of voters, to insure ease of access to polling places, and to resolve mechanical operations issues wherever those problems have been identified. This is a sobering undertaking, but critical to the fate of any secure democracy. ■

Congresswoman Maxine Waters, who represents the 35th Congressional District in California, is a Democratic chief deputy whip in the U.S. House of Representatives, a member of the House Financial Services and Judiciary committees, and a member of the Congressional Black Caucus.



For more information on elections and political participation, please log-on to the Joint Center's website.

AmeriCorps

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demonstration program to explore the possibility of using post-Cold War military resources to help solve problems here at home. The NCCC, enacted as part of the 1993 Defense Authorization Act, is a residential service program modeled on the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps and the United States military. The NCCC became part of a network of national service programs when the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 was signed into law. The AmeriCorps program has attracted a diverse array of members. Most are young adults, between the ages of 19 and 29, college educated and single. But AmeriCorps members are as diverse as the country they serve. And it may be that AmeriCorps is building the kind of lasting legacy that President Clinton envisioned. For example, a 1999 survey by Independent Sector showed that volunteerism is at an all-time high, with particular growth among young adults, 18 to 24.

In fact, a recent survey by the Institute of Politics at Harvard University found that most young adults would rather volunteer than vote. The survey found that 60 percent of college students had been involved in community service during the past year.

Some experts attribute this growth in volunteerism to the economy—people are confident they can enter the job market at any time if their personal finances become an issue. But Harris Wofford, the chief executive officer of the Corporation for National Service, has a better explanation. The former U.S. senator from Pennsylvania and one of the founders of the Peace Corps, Wofford recalled recently how President Kennedy inspired a generation. “The number one reason people volunteer is that they’re asked,” says Wofford. “The spirit of service and the appeal of the adventure of working on the hardest problems, I think, appeals to any generation.” ■

Tale of Three Cities

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application of police powers to force young troublemakers into church, treatment, employment, or jail. White priests have also served as a bridge to Boston’s largely Catholic police force. This was also coupled with the nation’s most restrictive gun control laws and a program to trace virtually every gun used in a crime. Between 1990 and 1996, crime in Boston dropped 61 percent overall, and since then the gains have been maintained. Juvenile killings there have been virtually eliminated.

The reductions in crime took place without building more prisons, prosecuting all juveniles as adults, or enacting any new mandatory minimums. However, compared to New York and Richmond, Boston started out as a low-violence, anti-gun community with a relatively small minority population. Because black ministers were willing to literally tell the police who to arrest, the approach did not require the increased interactions between police and average black citizens that have been so stressful in New York.

Like every other complicated public policy, protecting black communities from crime involves making tough, real-world trade-offs among the lesser of several evils, including infringement on civil liberties, increases in police aggressiveness, and increases in incarceration. But this has shown results. In the past, many aggressive police tactics, such as the massive drug sweeps of the mid-1980s, did not actually result in safer neighborhoods.

There are three clear lessons to be learned from the tales of these three cities: focusing police attention on guns reduces violence much more effectively than focusing on drugs; different tactics may be more acceptable in different political and social climates; and whatever tactics are used, the results are much less stressful when the police and the black community agree on the approach. ■

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TRENDLETTER

POLITICAL REPORT

By Mary K. Garber

U.S. Civil Rights Commission Investigates Florida Voting Irregularities

In response to numerous reports that black voters in Florida experienced problems at the polls during the November presidential election, on January 11 the U.S. Civil Rights Commission met in Tallahassee to begin its investigation of alleged voting irregularities. The independent bipartisan federal commission is looking into allegations that black voters were erroneously dropped from voter rolls, that state police set up barricades near polling places in black precincts, and that voters with disabilities or language problems were unable to obtain needed assistance. Many have suggested that these problems were part of a systematic effort to suppress the black vote, which was expected to overwhelmingly favor presidential candidate Al Gore.

The panel plans to call approximately 30 witnesses during its three-month investigation, which will continue in Miami next month. Among the first witnesses subpoenaed by the panel were Florida Governor Jeb Bush, who is also the brother of the President, and Florida Secretary of

State Katherine Harris, who is charged under Florida law with responsibility for elections and who served as one of the six co-chairs of the 2000 Bush campaign in Florida. Harris's post-election decisions and actions during the vote count and recount in Florida brought charges from Democrats that she acted as a Bush partisan in the execution of her state duties.

In his testimony, Governor Jeb Bush claimed that the responsibility for seeing that election laws were enforced in Florida belonged to the secretary of state and the 67 county supervisors of elections. Harris, on the other hand, disclaimed responsibility, saying that she had delegated election duties to Clay Roberts, director of the State Division of Elections and Harris's subordinate, and was, therefore, unable to answer the panel's questions on many points, a position that the commission chairperson, Mary Frances Berry, characterized as "laughable."

Berry expressed her disappointment that Harris continued to maintain that all questions had to be referred to Roberts, and other members of the commission expressed their dissatisfaction with Harris's statements as well. Commission member Victoria Wilson called the statements of state officials "a merry-go-round of denial," in which the governor passed the blame on to the secretary of state, who handed it off to Clay Roberts.

Governor Jeb Bush, nevertheless, testified that he believed he was responsible for ensuring that problems were rectified so that they would not

occur in the future. The governor has appointed a 21-member task force to study Florida election procedures and technology and to make recommendations to the governor and state legislature for remedies. Harris also repeated that the election problems had provided a valuable lesson for the state legislature about voting systems.

Black voters took the stand to tell their stories about election day problems. One of them, Roberta Tucker, a state employee, told the commission that on her way to vote she had been stopped by five white state highway patrol officers who had set up a roadblock near the precinct polling place. Highway patrol officers have claimed that the roadblock was a safety checkpoint unrelated to the election. Tucker pointed out that there were only white officers and that the effect was intimidation. Willie D. Whiting, Jr., a minister, said that he was told that he had been dropped from the rolls because he was a convicted felon, which was untrue. Only after Whiting threatened to call his attorney did election officials manage to clear up the problem and allow him to vote.

After its investigations are concluded in March, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission will submit its findings and recommendations to the Congress and the President.

NAACP Files Class-Action Suit

On January 10, the day before the U.S. Civil Rights Commission began

its hearings, the NAACP along with other civil rights organizations filed a class-action suit on behalf of Florida's black voters, claiming that thousands were wrongfully deprived of their right to vote in the presidential election, a circumstance that likely denied Al Gore the presidency.

While the suit does not challenge the results of the election, it does ask for the elimination of punch card ballots in the 25 counties where they are still used, for an improved system for removing inactive voters from registration lists, and for court monitoring of the state's elections for the next 10 years. Named as defendants in the suit are Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris, Director of the Florida Division of Elections Clay Roberts, and a number of county election supervisors.

Adora Obi Nweze, president of the Florida branch of the NAACP, said at a news conference in Miami that there was evidence of a "massive voter disenfranchisement of people of color" and characterized the election in Florida as being conducted in a manner that was "unfair, illegal, immoral, and undemocratic." Howard Simon, speaking on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union, which joined the NAACP in the suit, said there was much to be done in Florida to ensure that all votes are accurately counted. Anita Hodgkiss, codirector of the Voting Rights Project for the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, said that her group's election day hotline number, which had been set up mostly to offer rides to the polls, was besieged by calls about voting irregularities. She said that voters complained of a wide variety of problems, of which punch cards were just "the tip."

Nominee for Education Garners Support from all Sides

Besides Colin Powell, another one of President Bush's cabinet nominees who has escaped controversy and partisan protests is Roderick Paige. Unlike Bush's nominees to head the Justice, Interior, and Labor departments, the nomination of Rod Paige, the former superintendent of schools for Houston, met with nearly universal approbation from all sides, with only mild reservations expressed about his support of school vouchers and reliance on standardized testing. Paige has become the first African American secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

At his initial appearance before the Senate Education Committee, Paige seemed to garner nothing but praise from all quarters. The leader of the Houston teachers' union, Gayle Fallon, called Paige open and honest and praised his ability to remain focused on core issues. Advocates of school reform noted his record of efficient management, downsizing of administrative staff, and returning authority to the schools. As superintendent in Houston, he was known for his focus on school safety, accountability of faculty and staff, and the use of testing to verify student progress. During his tenure, the Houston school system, which is the largest in Texas and extremely diverse, saw improvement in student test scores and generally became more efficient as well.

The only negative point made against Paige was his support for vouchers, which allow some children to obtain public funds to finance private education. However, Paige's support for the policy is viewed as lukewarm. When asked in his confirmation hearings about the issue, he was immediately conciliatory, noting that he was not committed to any one particular means of making schools work.

As the Secretary of Education, Paige will be responsible for helping Bush keep his pledge to "leave no child behind." Education reform was the signature issue of the Bush campaign, and Bush may well look to legislation on this issue to showcase his first legislative victory. Paige's background and philosophy make him well suited to push the core issues of the Bush plan: regular testing of students to measure progress, increased funding, and greater flexibility for states in determining how the funds should be spent. This agenda, which fits in with legislation already being proposed by Democrat Connecticut Senator and former vice presidential candidate Joe Lieberman, is expected to gain bipartisan support. Although the Bush administration is expected to include vouchers in its initial bill, both Democrats and Republicans believe that this is only a gesture to the Republican right.

Paige, who is 67, was raised in racially segregated Mississippi by parents who prized education—his mother was a librarian and his father was a school principal. Paige earned his bachelor's degree from historically black Jackson State University in 1955 and earned a doctorate in physical education at Indiana University.

Paige began his career in education as a football coach at Utica Junior College in Utica, Mississippi and then went on to coach and teach at Houston's Texas Southern University, where he eventually rose to the position of dean of the College of Education. After serving on the school board for Houston, he was appointed superintendent by the board, despite opposition from Hispanics who were hoping for a Hispanic superintendent. In this position, he gained the support of all segments of the Houston community. ■

ECONOMIC REPORT

The California Energy Crisis: A Cautionary Tale of Deregulation

By Margaret C. Simms

The publicity generated by the recent energy crisis in California, with its rolling blackouts, has heightened the visibility of a restructuring that has been going on in the electric utility industry. While deregulation and other changes have been on the agendas of many states for the past four or five years, rarely have they captured the attention of the average citizen. When the Joint Center asked questions about competition and the deregulation of electric companies in its 1998 National Opinion Poll, more than half the respondents said they were only slightly familiar or not at all familiar with the issue. Only 10 percent of the general population and 17 percent of the black respondents indicated they were very familiar with deregulation.

Why Deregulation?

For most of the 20th century, the electric power industry was heavily regulated. Utility companies were given monopoly power within certain states or regions in exchange for state control over prices and operations. Each utility had a captive consumer market and an assured or negotiated rate of return on its investments in plant and equipment, and consumers had a reliable source of energy (for the most part) and a fixed or regulated price for the product. But as time passed, some experts—economists, power companies, and policy makers—began to argue that by allowing new producers to compete with the

existing utilities, consumers would get more choices and, ultimately, lower prices. This position was bolstered by changes in technology that made it more economical (and potentially more profitable) for new producers to enter the market.

From the standpoint of the utility companies, the disappearance of their monopoly markets brought many disadvantages. One of their major arguments against this sort of restructuring was that their operating costs might never be recovered, since they could not be assured that retail prices would remain high enough to cover the costs of new plants they built during periods of regulation and would continue to own and operate. Moreover, since most proposals called for utilities to sell some generating plants and other capital stock to future competitors, there was also a concern that the sale price might not cover costs either. These are the so-called “stranded costs” that dominated discussions of deregulation a few years ago.

The fact that utilities were forced to divest themselves of some of their generating capacity has meant that they will not only be competing with others on the retail market, they will also be competing for energy to sell on the wholesale side of the market. Most deregulation planners had anticipated that a gradual move to competition would hold prices steady on the retail side while companies adjusted to competition, and that when deregulation was fully implemented, any harm caused by falling prices would be minimized.

But no one anticipated that the wholesale cost of energy would rise to the point where even the regulated retail price would be too low to cover costs. This is why California utilities have been hammered in the past six months. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, the wholesale price of energy

was \$12 per megawatt hour in mid-1998 when deregulation began. It was ten times higher than that in June 2000, and reached \$200 per megawatt hour by the end of this past year. So the state’s major utilities, Pacific Gas and Electric and Southern California Edison, have been paying more for energy than they can get from consumers, who have a fixed unit price. And being unable to recoup costs, they ran out of money to pay suppliers.

Restructuring in Other States

Even though the issue has not been very visible to the public, by July 2000, 24 states had enacted legislation to restructure their electric power industries and one state had issued a comprehensive regulatory order (see table). In addition, two states had legislation or orders pending and 16 states had commissions or legislative investigations underway. Only eight states had no activity in this area as of mid-2000. According to the Federal Energy Management Program (FEMP) at the U.S. Department of Energy, most of the states with deregulation programs have features similar to those in California. They include:

- customer choice of power suppliers, with the local distribution utility delivering power to all customers;
- a transition period between regulated rates, and fully competitive power purchases;
- recovery by the utility, through the transition rates, of costs that might not be recouped in the competitive market, often called “stranded costs”;
- restriction on the distribution utilities—ability to sell power in the new, competitive market, including a requirement to sell some or all of their generators;

- centralized operation of generation and transmission in an Independent System Operator (ISO), which ensures reliable and nondiscriminatory access to the power transmission grid;
- continuation of existing regulated rates, often with an automatic rate cut, during the transition period;
- continuation of a regulated rate for customers who do not choose a new power supplier or are unable to obtain service from the competitive market, so-called default service;
- expectations of significant rate and bill reductions after the transition period ends; and
- continuation of existing demand-side management (DSM), low-income assistance, and other so-called public benefits programs for some period of time.

As a result of the California crisis, several states are now postponing some or all aspects of their deregula-

tion program, while some are considering modifying their programs. Several states that were recently in the investigation stage are now delaying any further action at all. For example, Arkansas, which was scheduled to open retail markets in January 2002, is considering a delay of up to 18 months.

The squeeze in California is due, in part, to a lack of investment in new power supplies in the face of rising demand. Not every state will encounter problems of California's magnitude. *The Wall Street Journal* cites Pennsylvania as a deregulation story that has had a very different ending. With an adequate power supply and fairly high retail rates, the utilities in Pennsylvania have been well able to pay the bills, and new competitors have been able to offer service at lower rates and still make a profit.

What Does the Future Hold?

California will find a short-term solution to its problem through state government action, with taxpayers

paying costs that the utilities cannot recover from them as customers. A long-term solution will require more thought. Specifically, how does one adjust market conditions in a way that promotes expansion of energy sources and moderation of the demand for energy?

The experience of this past year has consumers across the country wondering if deregulation is a good thing. In 1998, 40 percent of respondents to the Joint Center's national poll indicated that they believed it probably was. It is doubtful that as many would hold the same opinion today.

For additional information on electric industry restructuring, visit the Department of Energy website, www.eia.doe.gov/fuelelectric.html. An electric industry restructuring primer is available on DOE's Federal Energy Management Program website (www.eren.doe.gov/femp/utility.html) or on CD-ROM. ■

Status of State Electric Utility Deregulation Activity, as of July 2000

Restructuring Legislation Enacted	Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia
Comprehensive Regulatory Order Issued	New York
Legislation/Orders Pending	Alaska, South Carolina
Commission or Legislative Investigation Ongoing	Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming
No Activity	Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Nebraska, South Dakota, Tennessee