



TERRY E. BRANSTAD
GOVERNOR

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

KIM REYNOLDS
LT. GOVERNOR

March 6, 2013

Dear Governor:

I am happy to share with you what I believe to be a valuable asset available to each of you – the service of your citizens. It is no secret in Iowa that service and volunteerism are near and dear to my heart. I have long been a believer that our community volunteers, charitable nonprofits, and faith-based institutions are often best equipped to provide long-term solutions to the challenges we face. Promoting service is an issue that Republicans and Democrats should both wholeheartedly embrace, especially during times of austere budgets.

National and community service programs like AmeriCorps and Senior Corps offer many ways to develop creative solutions through public-private partnerships that empower states, communities and non-profits by tapping into the essence of what makes our great union so strong - the spirit of our citizens. It has been my pleasure to work with the Corporation for National and Community Service and our state service commission, the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, to utilize these assets to better leverage volunteerism in Iowa. Working with my state commission and private sector partners, I recently launched a call to service in Iowa encouraging each resident to volunteer at least 50 hours a year, to help make Iowa an even better place. Even though this is only a slight change from our existing rate of volunteerism, this change would equate to more than one billion dollars in additional service to Iowa.

But asking citizens to serve is not enough; we must also have meaningful volunteer opportunities. That means training nonprofits on volunteer management practices and making sure they have the capacity to coordinate volunteers effectively. Through national and community service programs like AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and the Volunteer Generation Fund, we are doing these things and leveraging tens of thousands of new volunteers annually to meet our most pressing needs. Some of our most promising and cost-effective approaches to literacy, disaster response, drop-out prevention and community development are fueled by the service of volunteers leveraged from these programs.

Through national service, essential public services can be provided more efficiently and effectively. For example, I was encouraged to see the launch in Iowa of the new national FEMA Corps partnership, which uses AmeriCorps members to provide direct services at a lower cost following disasters, providing a net savings to taxpayers of over \$60 million annually when fully implemented. But states are leading the effort too -- and we can learn from each other. For example, we are working on developing a Reading Corps in Iowa based upon a very successful effort in Minnesota that utilizes proven tutoring strategies. The Reading Corps is saving Minnesota millions of dollars in special education costs and will provide long-term benefits by helping kids read at grade level.

I believe there are possibilities like these in **every** state. I encourage you to reach out to your State Service Commission and community leaders to develop your own initiatives based on your state's needs. In doing so you will find that building the investment and ownership in our communities through civic engagement will pay enormous dividends. In fact, recent research has shown a direct correlation between civic engagement and the strength of local economies as well as the physical health of your residents. To me, service is a "no brainer." I hope and encourage you to find this out for yourself. Please feel free to contact me if I and my staff can be of assistance - we are 'at your service.'

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry E. Branstad".

Terry E. Branstad
Governor of Iowa