

CRS Report for Congress

Received through the CRS Web

VISTA and the Senior Volunteer Service Corps: Description and Funding Levels

Ann Lordeman
Specialist in Social Legislation
Domestic Social Policy Division

Summary

The Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program and the National Senior Volunteer Corps are authorized under the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, as amended (DVSA), and are administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), an independent agency.¹ The purpose of DVSA is to foster and expand voluntary citizen service in communities throughout the Nation in activities designed to help the poor, the disadvantaged, the vulnerable, and the elderly. The Senior Corps consists of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), the Foster Grandparent Program, the Senior Companion Program, and the Senior Demonstration Program. Funding for both VISTA and the Senior Corps, is contained in the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act.² This report provides a brief summary of each of the DVSA programs, including the FY2005 appropriations (P.L. 108-447) and the President's FY2006 budget request.³

VISTA (Title I-A). *Program Focus:* Serving poverty communities. *Eligibility:* 18 years or older. *Amount of volunteer service:* Full time for up to three years. *Benefits:* a living allowance and either a \$1,200 "lump-sum" cash stipend or a \$4,725 educational award per year of service. The maximum number of lump-sum payments per participant

¹ Although authorization of appropriations for DVSA programs expired at the end of FY1996, they continue to be funded through appropriations.

² For further information on DVSA programs, see CRS Report RL30186, *Community Service: A Description of AmeriCorps, Foster Grandparents, and Other Federally Funded Programs*, by Ann Lordeman.

³ For the Corporation's FY2006 budget justification, see [http://www.cns.gov/pdf/about/2006budget_justification.pdf].

is three, and the maximum number of educational awards is two.⁴ *Administrative Entity*: State Office of the Corporation. *FY2005 Appropriation*: \$94.2 million. *FY2006 Request*: \$96.4 million.

Special Volunteer Programs (Section 122, Title I-C). Since FY2002, funds have been appropriated for homeland security grants, which are awarded to national and local nonprofit agencies, and cities, counties, and state commissions on national and community services. *FY2005 Appropriation*: \$5.0 million. *FY2006 Request*: \$0.0 million.⁵ Also, under the authority of Section 122, the Administration is requesting funds for Teach for America, a corps of recent college graduates who teach in low-income urban and rural communities. *FY2005 Appropriation*: \$0.0 million. *FY2006 Request*: \$4.0 million.⁶

National Senior Volunteer Corps (Title II). The four programs comprising the Senior Corps are summarized below. For FY2005, the total appropriation for these programs was 215.9 million. For FY2006, the request is 219.8 million.

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) (Title II-A). *Program Focus*: Serving the community. *Eligibility*: 55 years or older. *Amount of volunteer service*: Up to 40 hours a week. *Benefits*: No direct benefits (e.g., stipends or educational awards). *Administrative Entity*: State Office of the Corporation. *FY2005 Appropriation*: \$58.5 million. *FY2006 Request*: \$60.3 million.

Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) (Title II-B). *Program Focus*: Serving children. *Eligibility*: 60 years or older and low income. *Amount of volunteer service*: Average of 20 hours a week. *Benefits*: A stipend of \$2.65 an hour. *Administrative Entity*: State Office of the Corporation. *FY2005 Appropriation*: \$111.4 million. *FY2006 Request*: \$112.1 million.

Senior Companion Program (SCP) (Title II-C). *Program Focus*: Serving adults. *Eligibility*: 60 years or older and low income. *Amount of volunteer service*: Average of 20 hours a week. *Benefits*: A stipend of \$2.65 an hour. *Administrative Entity*: State Office of the Corporation. *FY2005 Appropriation*: \$45.9 million. *FY2006 Request*: \$47.4 million.

Senior Demonstration Program (Title II-E). The Corporation enters into grants or contracts with public or nonprofit organizations for the purpose of demonstrating

⁴ Funding for educational awards is provided for in the National Service Trust authorized by the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (NCSA). For information on NCSA programs and funding, see CRS Report RS20420, *AmeriCorps and Other Service Programs: Description and Funding Levels*, by Ann Lordeman.

⁵ The Administration in its *Fiscal Year 2006 Congressional Budget Justification Budget*, Feb. 7, 2005 cites on page 151 funding constraints as a consideration in deciding to request no further funding. From FY2002 to FY2004, 17 grantees were funded for a three-year grant cycle. The 12 grantees funded in FY2004 would not receive a third year of funding.

⁶ In FY2004 and FY2005, the Administration requested \$3.0 million and \$4.0 million, respectively, under the authority of NCSA. No funds were appropriated.

innovative activities involving older individuals as volunteers. *FY2005 Appropriation:* \$0.0.⁷ *FY2006 Request:* \$0.0 million.

Total DVSA Funding. For FY2005, the total funding, including funding for program administration, was \$353.7 million. For FY2006, the request is \$360.0 million.

⁷ The Administration's FY2005 request was \$1.4 million.