

From *The Washington Examiner*:

Expanded Americorps has an authoritarian feel

By Examiner Editorial

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With almost no public attention, both chambers of Congress in the past week advanced an alarming expansion of the Americorps national service plan, with the number of federally funded community service job increasing from 75,000 to 250,000 at a cost of \$5.7 billion. Lurking behind the feel-good rhetoric spouted by the measure's advocates is a bill that on closer inspection reveals multiple provisions that together create a strong odor of creepy authoritarianism. The House passed the measure overwhelmingly, while only 14 senators had the sense and courage to vote against it on a key procedural motion. Every legislator who either voted for this bill or didn't vote at all has some serious explaining to do.

Last summer, then-candidate Barack Obama threw civil liberties to the wind when he proposed a civilian national security force that's just as powerful, just as strong, just as well-funded as the regular military. The expanded Americorps is not quite so disturbing, but a number of provisions in the bill raise serious concerns.

To begin with, the legislation threatens the voluntary nature of Americorps by calling for consideration of a workable, fair, and reasonable mandatory service requirement for all able young people. It anticipates the possibility of requiring all individuals in the United States to perform such service including elementary school students. The bill also summons up unsettling memories of World War II-era paramilitary groups by saying the new program should combine the best practices of civilian service with the best aspects of military service, while establishing campuses that serve as operational headquarters, complete with superintendents and uniforms for all participants. It allows for the elimination of all age restrictions in order to involve Americans at all stages of life. And it calls for creation of a permanent cadre in a National Community Civilian Corps.

But that's not all. The bill also calls for youth engagement zones in which service learning is a mandatory part of the curriculum in all of the secondary schools served by the local educational agency. This updated form of voluntary community service is also to be integrated into the science, technology, engineering and mathematics curricula at all levels of schooling. Sounds like a government curriculum for government approved service learning, which is nothing less than indoctrination. Now, ask yourself if congressmen who voted for this monstrosity had a clue what they were voting for. If not, they're guilty of dereliction of duty. If yes, the implications are truly frightening.