

Remarks of Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Full Committee Hearing: “Demanding Accountability at the
Corporation for National and Community Service”
2175 Rayburn House Office Building
Tuesday, May 24, 2016 / 10:00 am

Good morning and thank you, Chairwoman Foxx. I would also like to welcome Wendy Spencer, chief executive officer (CEO) for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and Deborah Jeffries, the Inspector General, for joining us today.

We are here today to discuss the critical role that the Corporation for National and Community Service, or CNCS, has in encouraging volunteerism and civic engagement. I’m a big fan of saying that “service is indeed the rent we pay for living on this earth.” Service is the foundation of our democracy, and its value to our society cannot be overstated.

Since its founding, CNCS has engaged millions of volunteers in national and community service. These volunteers have served as teachers,

tutors, mentors, and counselors working with disadvantaged students in high need schools. In cases of natural disasters, volunteers have helped local communities prepare for, mitigate, respond, and recover from forest fires, floods, hurricanes and tornadoes. Volunteers have assisted our nation's veterans in adjusting to civilian life, constructed and rebuilt homes for thousands of families, helped our nation's seniors in maintaining the highest degree possible of independent living and much more.

All of us ought to be engaged in national service. So thank you CNCS for being a leader on this issue. You see, my upbringing taught me that we won't be able to celebrate community nor can we build community—"if we're not inclusive and don't care for the least of these." As we engage ourselves in trying to improve and better our community, we must do so remembering that we are thy brother's and thy sister's keepers and as such we are inextricably tied to one another. But in order for the community to be engaged, the community must be involved. And that is exactly what CNCS does. CNCS and the

community volunteers they coordinate enable tens of thousands of non-profit organizations, faith-based groups, schools, and municipal agencies to solve tough problems and meet local needs. CNCS serves, builds, and makes an impact that changes lives and communities.

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” During times of challenge, CNCS is there—

- During the Flint Water Crisis, CNCS deployed an AmeriCorps team to Flint, Michigan, to support state and local efforts to protect the public health of residents facing challenges from increased lead levels in the Flint water supply.
- When Hurricane Katrina devastated the South, CNCS deployed an AmeriCorps team to the region.

- And when tornadoes wreaked havoc in Oklahoma, AmeriCorps volunteers were there.

Needless to say, I could praise the instances of these volunteers helping our nation's communities in times of need. But, I'll stop here and say that it is without a doubt that CNCS has improved the quality of life in my home state of North Carolina and in communities around this great nation.

The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act reauthorized and expanded the national service programs administered by CNCS. After I was sworn into Congress, I made it a priority to join the Committee on Education and the Workforce. I fought to get on this Committee intentionally because I understand the significance of community engagement. And as a member of this Committee, I feel responsible for ensuring that the Corporation has strong management, monitoring, and oversight, as well as the resources to effectively administer its programs and carry out its

mission. While there is always room for improvement, I strongly believe that CNCS is taking this responsibility seriously.

With regard to the recent incidences that occurred with the AmeriCorps program, CNCS discovered and resolved these issues with deliberate action. And I can't help but think that if this were anything other than services related to women's health, that the Corporation would not be called in front of us here today.

As we proceed with this hearing, I want to strongly encourage my colleagues on this Committee to focus on the vital importance of service to our nation. While we must maintain vigorous oversight and enforcement, we must also remember how CNCS engages over a million volunteers, which is something that benefits local communities all across America, on both sides of the aisle. And I look forward to hearing more about how we can improve and strengthen national service programs that are so important to our nation's success.

Thank you.

Questions: