

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 jobs 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 upon closer inspection reveals multiple provisions that together create a strong odor of creepy authoritarianism.

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.

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