



Sent: April 13, 2009

Subject: AmeriCorps Expansion, "Crowding Out" Community, and Students Chilling Speech?!

With warmer and longer days, most of the snow banks in New Hampshire are gone. We hope you are enjoying spring in your area.

First, if you have not registered for July's [No Better Time conference](#), we encourage you to register before April 30th to take advantage of the early bird discount (\$250). We know budgets are tight, but we think this is a great value for the learning exchanges we have planned for the conference.

Second, President Obama recently signed into law the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, which will expand AmeriCorps by 170,000 positions, making it the largest expansion of civilian service since the New Deal. We think this is a positive step, but we also agree with TDI Board Member Peter Levine, who wrote in his [blog](#), "As I've argued before, no national service bill can engage most Americans in productive civic work. AmeriCorps is open to citizens of all ages, but most volunteers will be young adults who can take a year for educational service or k-12 students who will benefit from the service-learning provisions. We must treat the Kennedy Act as a positive step and a momentum-builder, but not as an adequate way to fulfill the President's pledge to make 'service and active citizenship' a 'central cause' of his administration." We wonder what you think about the passage of the Serve America Act. What additional steps would you like to see the Obama administration take to fulfill his pledge of making service and active citizenship a central cause to his administration? [Let us know](#).

Third, the Harwood Institute and the Kettering Foundation just released a new report, *Organization First Approach: How Programs Crowd Out Community*. Authors Richard Harwood and John Creighton find that many community minded organizations focus more on strategic planning, fund-raising, and board relations than they do in effectively engaging the community. The result is a "posture of inwardness." We want to draw particular attention to section three of their report which offers clarity and insight into why many organizations shy away from deliberation with the community. You can [download the report here](#).

Fourth, thanks to the [National Coalition of Dialogue & Deliberation](#) for drawing attention to a recent op-ed in the *Boston Globe* by Robert Shibley in which he documents a "growing movement by students to shut off debate by organized groups and silence speakers with whom they disagree. Rather than engage in the give-and-take that should be characteristic of the university as a 'marketplace of ideas,' these students have decided that opposing views don't even bear hearing." This is certainly not a new issue on campuses, but we think it is an important, albeit messy and politically charged issue, that campuses need to be discussing.

