

Why don't conservatives like AmeriCorps?

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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With a government shutdown looming due to federal-budget deadlock, House Republicans [are proposing](#) a stopgap measure--not a [compromise](#) but a short-term enactment of the massive budget cuts passed last week by the House but dismissed by the Democratic-controlled Senate and White House.

Along with hurting economic growth--that's according to [Goldman Sachs](#), not some liberal think tank--this proposal would make deep cuts to a wide variety of programs and eliminate some altogether. It would mean the end of AmeriCorps, which played a huge role in, among other things, Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts. [Here's an anecdote](#) from AmeriCorps alumnus Nathan Rothstein, who served in New Orleans:

When we had a spare moment, we would walk down to Frenchmen street or go to neighborhood meetings in the evening where we met other young AmeriCorps volunteers working in relief organizations around the city. It became clear that AmeriCorps volunteers led the majority of the volunteer coordination in the city. Anyone who picked up a hammer or painted a wall in the past five years in New Orleans was most likely managed by an AmeriCorps volunteer.

According to a recent study conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service, "more than 110,000 national service volunteers have contributed more than 9.6 million hours to the relief, recovery, and rebuilding effort. [AmeriCorps] also have coordinated an additional 648,000 community volunteers, a major share of the overall volunteer force."

Church groups, individual families and others from across the political spectrum trekked down to the Gulf Coast to help out, and AmeriCorps headed up much of the difficult and crucial work of coordinating volunteers to put their service to good use. Does this sound like something we should cut?

Meanwhile, religious right leaders are [pushing the deficit-hawk gospel](#), lending some (dubious) biblical support to their spending-cut-fanatic conservative brethren. Tony Perkins even [lists](#) AmeriCorps funding among several "taxpayer subsidies to the Left." If paying young people poverty wages to serve others (often by corralling other workers who aren't paid at all) is a leftist thing, who counts as a compassionate conservative anymore?