



Hands On Nashville volunteer Vivian Perry: She says the group gives young professionals a chance to "help others and, on top of that, they can help themselves—help their conversation skills, help their social skills."

DANA THOMAS, FOR THE CHRONICLE

House and Senate Pass Scaled-Back Version of Clinton Service Bill

By KRISTIN A. GOSS

A SCALED-BACK VERSION of President Clinton's community-service plan has passed both houses of Congress, but young recruits aren't expected to get down to work until almost a year from now.

The program, which Mr. Clinton has touted as a domestic Peace Corps that would help tens of thousands of young people pay for college, would provide education or job-training benefits to people who provide one or two years of work tackling social problems. They would be recruited by local and national youth corps, colleges, and other non-profits, which would receive federal money toward the participants' living expenses.

The bill passed by a broad margin in the House, where Democrats far outnumber Republicans, but by a much slimmer majority in the Senate.

The House of Representatives' vote was 275 to 152. Twenty-six Republicans voted for the plan; five Democrats were against it.

In the Senate, Democrats had to incorporate a series of last-minute changes in order to gain enough Republican votes to end debate on the bill. Democrats angrily charged that the Republicans were engaged in a politically motivated filibuster; the Republicans denied that, saying they merely were engaged in "negotiations" stemming from concerns over the program's cost and viability.

The Senate vote, cast last week, was 58 to 41. Seven Republicans backed the bill, and four Democrats voted against it.

Eli J. Segal, Assistant to the President and director of the White House Office of National Service, said that the White House's real challenge lies ahead: implementing a big new program after what he called "two decades of cynicism about government's ability to deliver."

He said that the President saw national service as "the mechanism, to some extent" to further his other domestic priorities, including improving health care, reducing welfare dependency, and combatting crime.

President Clinton called service "the American way to change America."

A bipartisan committee of House and Senate delegates met last week to begin resolving more than two dozen discrepancies between the two bills.

Key Issues for Charities

On key provisions of interest to non-profits, neither chamber made dramatic changes from the President's legislative proposal.

Non-profits that enlist service participants still would be required to pay 15 per cent of their minimum-wage stipend, with the government picking up the rest. (The stipend would total about \$7,400 a year.) Health-care benefits would be split according to the same formula.

Most of the amendments that would affect non-profits were contained only in the Senate version of the bill. Among them:

- ▶ Prohibiting participation of organizations that spend more than 20 per cent of their annual budget, or whose primary purpose is, to influence public policy. That change came in response to arguments by Republican Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas that the government

cal newspaper, but has received few responses. Most people aren't willing to work during lunch time, she says.

But this type of work is typical of the kind of volunteerism that appeals to the 26,000 people who have latched on to the City Cares network. Over 1,000 new volunteers a month have been signing up to participate in a total of more than 600 community-service projects in 16 cities. New City Cares groups are being formed in five more cities, from Seattle to Miami.

Making Volunteer Opportunities Accessible

The City Cares groups cater to people looking for chances to squeeze an hour or two of volunteer work into their busy schedules, whether that means skipping lunch with co-workers once a month, rising extra early on a weekend morning, or heading to a shelter instead of a movie one evening after work.

"We're trying to sell commitment in the context of flexibility," says Alan K. Chambers, executive director of City Cares of America. "We are making volunteer opportunities accessible." Mr. Chambers is a former director of leadership and project development at the Children's Defense Fund.

City Cares aims its recruitment efforts at young professionals, oftentimes rising business executives, between the ages of 25 to 45. Eighty-five per cent of the network's volunteers are white and 60 per cent are women. Under the leadership of their national organization, the groups are working to attract more members of minority groups and more men.

The groups are often known as bastions of singles who are both nice and hip, and no one disputes that this is one of their principal draws.

"The bar scene just gets really old," says Suzanne

Foundation in New York. She is starting a northern New Jersey Cares group with the foundation's co-executive director, who is 26. "You have gyms and things like that," she notes, "but this way at least you get to really know people."

Many of the groups' members tried volunteering in the past but were turned off when a charity placed too many demands on their time or by a feeling that their contributions weren't meaningful enough. What they get from City Cares is a relatively hassle-free means of becoming involved in the community, and projects specifically designed to give them the feeling that they are making a difference.

While there are some variations from city to city, the groups—all technically independent of City Cares of America and all operating under different names—generally follow a few standard practices. Among other things, they:

- ▶ Require only a short, single-evening orientation on the Cares mission and procedures before prospective volunteers can participate in their first project.

- ▶ Mail volunteers a monthly calendar of local community-service opportunities, usually group projects, that typically take place before or after work and on weekends. The calendar lists the name of the leader for each project and his or her phone number. Volunteers are told to get in touch with the leader before showing up.

- ▶ Allow volunteers to get involved in as much or as little as they like.

- ▶ Provide volunteers with a wide variety of programs to choose from, including recreational projects with low-income children, housing renovations for the poor, soup kitchens, food banks, and park-cleanup efforts.

- ▶ Insure that volunteers are directly involved with

House, Senate Pass Scaled-Back Version of President's National-Service Program

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should not be paying young people to lobby. The House bill describes categories of eligible programs, all of which are service-oriented, but it would not explicitly bar lobbying organizations.

▶ Allowing non-profits to spend no more than 15 per cent of their national-service funds in the first year on administrative costs. That would drop to no more than 10 per cent in later years.

▶ Limiting the percentage of students per university who can participate. Even some of the service bill's supporters had worried that if students had more federal money to pay for college, educational institutions would find it easier to raise tuition.

▶ Protecting non-profits from having to insure national-service participants against lawsuits arising from their work. Any claims against the participants would be covered by the federal government. The House bill would require states to pass laws insuring volunteers who administer the service program, but not the participants themselves.

▶ Requiring the Corporation for National and Community Service, the entity that would be created to administer the program, to set grant-making priorities within the four broad program areas outlined by the President: the environment, education, public safety, and human needs. The Administration's bill proposed simply that the corporation be allowed to do so.

▶ Authorizing a program specifically for rural community service.

▶ Ordering the corporation to evaluate whether the service program was providing opportunities to poor people and whether an education or job-training benefit was necessary to recruit participants. These provisions came in response to Republican concerns.

Clinton Sought \$7.4-Billion

In both chambers, the amount that the President originally hoped to spend on national-service workers was eroded.

In their compromise with Republicans, Democratic Senators agreed to authorize \$1.5-billion in spending on the program over three years, starting with \$300-million in fiscal 1994.

President Clinton had hoped for \$7.4-billion over four years, but in his legislative proposal he had only asked for \$394-million in 1994 and unspecified sums in the following years. (The House stuck with the President's proposal.)

If the Senate version is adopted, the reduction in spending for 1994 would mean a commensurate decrease in the number of participants. President Clinton had hoped for 25,000, but the Senate has provided for 20,000. Congressional aides noted, however, that that number is only a rough estimate.

The bill that will be sent for the President's signature determines the maximum amount that Congress may spend on the program; another bill will be needed to determine how much the government will actually distribute for service work. Mr. Segal said that the White House hoped that participants

would be able to start their community service in June of 1994.

Both the Senate and the House, bowing to concerns from veterans' groups, reduced the education voucher that participants would receive to \$4,725 a year. That is equal to 90 per cent of what members of the military receive in education vouchers under the Montgomery GI Bill. President Clinton had asked that national-service participants receive \$5,000.

The lawmakers who secured the reduction—Rep. Bob Stump and Sen. John McCain, both Republicans from Arizona—had argued that enlisted men and women take bigger risks and suffer more hard-

ships than domestic-service workers would, and therefore should be rewarded with more generous benefits.

Rallying for Support

The accommodations came as disagreements threatened to postpone Senate consideration of the bill. With reports of a Republican filibuster circulating, non-profit supporters of the bill hastily assembled hundreds of young people for a "press rally" in a jam-packed Senate conference room.

Carrying signs that read "Baby Busters Against a Filibuster" and "Yes National Service. Give Us a Chance," the young people said

they had rounded up 20,000 people who had sent postcards to Congress urging passage of the President's bill.

Flanked by Congressional backers, including Sen. Harris Wofford, Democrat of Pennsylvania, and Rep. Christopher Shays, Republican of Connecticut, Nicole Thomas, a member of the D.C. Service Corps, told the crowd: "We are not a lost generation."

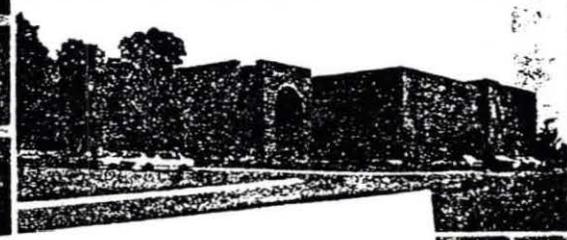
Andrew Shue, who stars in the television series "Melrose Place," flew to Washington to tell lawmakers: "We ask that political games not destroy our chance to play our part."

Not at the rally, but a big sup-

porter of the bill, was Elizabeth H. Dole, president of the American Red Cross. Her husband, Kansas Republican Bob Dole, the Senate Minority Leader, was heading the effort to win concessions from the White House by stalling a vote on the bill.

"We understand that community service is neither a panacea for the nation's problems nor a substitute for traditional volunteerism," Mrs. Dole wrote to Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, who shepherded the bill through the Senate. "However, your bill will enlarge the means by which individuals can make a difference in their community."

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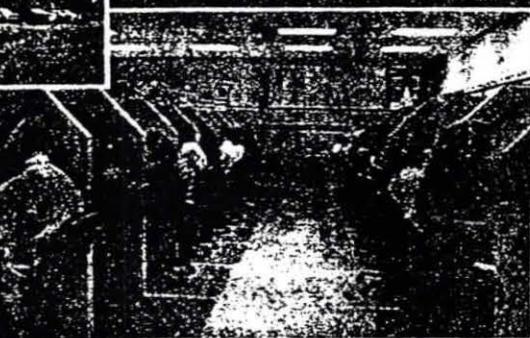
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