



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on March 31, 2009

Kennedy's Serve America Act Passes Congress

Paid volunteers? Only the federal government could come up with such a concept. The Congressional Budget Office [estimates](#) that the bill would cost \$1.2 billion in 2010 and significantly more in subsequent years.

Why do we need it? "This legislation will enable many more Americans to do something for their country to meet the many challenges facing us," the bill's namesake, Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy, [told the New York Times](#).



"Enables" Americans to do more for their country?

It's almost a powerful enough quote to make you wonder how Americans managed to serve in their communities before the federal government began paying people to do it ... if you were born yesterday. Nothing's stopping anyone from serving in their community right now, without this legislation. Yet [the House passed](#) the final version of the legislation on March 31 by the lopsided vote of 275-149 (the Senate had approved it even more overwhelmingly by a 79-19 vote on March 27).

President Barack Obama, who plans to sign the legislation, sounds like Kennedy [in his praise of the bill](#): "Because of this legislation, millions of Americans at all stages of their lives will have new opportunities to serve their country."

By "serve their country," Obama means "servitude to government."

This bill is not about volunteerism, as Congressman Ron Paul (R-Texas) explained on the House floor March 18:

Participation in the program is not voluntary for the taxpayers. Second, nothing in the bill prevents federal taxpayer dollars from being used to support state and local programs that force children to perform "community service" as a condition of graduating from high school. Because an increasing number of schools across the nation are forcing children to provide "service" as a condition of graduating, it is quite likely that the funds authorized by this bill will be used to support mandatory service.

The text of the bill makes numerous references to "local education agencies" as the key to fascist-style public-private "partnerships" under the legislation.

National service, national servitude. Whatever. It's only a couple of letters difference. It's only a couple of letters difference, that is, unless you count the approximately 200 pages of new rules and regulations that are contained in the bill.

The general argument for public service is based upon the absurd twin assumptions that government is the seat of all morality in the nation and that it can more economically and efficiently pinch pennies than churches and civic organizations.



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Ron Paul [explained to House members](#) that this unconstitutional bill (H.R. 1388) will "take money from one group of citizens and use that money to bribe other citizens into performing 'national service'" and that it "violates the basic moral principles of individual liberty that this country was founded upon."

Paul cited Ronald Reagan from *Human Events* in 1979 to explain the principles underlying national service: "It [national service and conscription] rests on the assumption that your kids belong to the state. If we buy that assumption then it is for the state — not for parents, the community, the religious institutions or teachers — to decide who shall have what values and who shall do what work, when, where and how in our society. That assumption isn't a new one. The Nazis thought it was a great idea."

Photo of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy



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