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CUTS THREATEN TO KILL SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS Nearly 6,000 New York Seniors Could Be Affected

New York, NY – HR 1, the Continuing Resolution for fiscal year 2011 passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on February 19, 2011, eliminates funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the programs it administers, including the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program, the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program (collectively the “Senior Corps”) as well as AmeriCorps, VISTA, and Learn and Serve America. CNCS is an independent federal department in the Executive Branch. Senior Corps is a very important collection of programs under CNCS that is slated for elimination under HR 1. Eliminating CNCS would eliminate Senior Corps - resulting in the “firing” of more than 450,000 senior volunteers nationwide, depleting vital services to the people, young and old, who rely on them.

In New York City, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), created and operated since 1966 by the Community Service Society, delivers critical services throughout the five boroughs designed to meet pressing local needs. Volunteers ranging in age from 55 to 101 assist New Yorkers in gaining basic money management skills, mentor children of incarcerated parents and at-risk youth, reduce the rate of recidivism by assisting the formerly incarcerated in removing barriers to gainful employment, provide literacy services to children and adults, assist at soup kitchens and food pantries providing meals and food packages to the poor, and deliver meals and provide companionship to the homebound, among many other services.

“RSVP volunteers provide an invaluable service throughout New York City and save the city and service organizations millions of dollars,” said David R. Jones, president and CEO of the Community Service Society of New York. “RSVP is an essential component of life in the city for millions of New Yorkers.”

The impact on New York City communities with the elimination of RSVP would be profound. In 2010, over 5,600 volunteers contributed close to one million hours of service through RSVP. The program is tremendously cost-effective. In New York City, the yearly cost in federal funding to field one RSVP volunteer is \$162; the federal costs per volunteer hour is \$0.93, while the value of the volunteers’ hours, if calculated at the minimum wage, exceeds \$7.2 million.

Because CNCS recognizes that the best ideas come from within our communities rather than Washington D.C., CNCS invests in community solutions, tapping the energy and ingenuity of the American people to solve problems. Every day, New York City’s RSVP volunteers make a profound difference in their communities and improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers. Elimination of RSVP from the federal budget would have the following impact on New York City:

- 144 health-related community organizations would lose the services of 1,840 RSVP volunteers.
- 134 social services programs would lose the services of 1,442 RSVP volunteers.
- 68 community partners providing services for older adults would lose the services of 1,322 RSVP volunteers.

The elimination of CNCS and/or Senior Corps and the funds associated with those programs would have a drastic effect on millions of people all over the U.S., including our own community, especially to people most in need of these services.

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For 165 years, the Community Service Society of New York has been the leading voice on behalf of low-income New Yorkers and continues to advocate for the economic security of the working poor in the nation’s largest city.