

DOGE shuts down AmeriCorps programs nationwide, affecting education, disaster services and environmental programs

James Vega, J. Cooper
18 May 2025

A sweeping \$400 million cut to the federal budget has forced AmeriCorps to shut down programs across the country. This reduction—about 41 percent of the program’s total \$1 billion annual budget—has sent shockwaves throughout the US.

The cuts have ended or disrupted over 1,000 programs nationwide, offering a wide range of services, including education, disaster response, environmental conservation, housing support, and food security efforts. Over a quarter of AmeriCorps staffers provide educational services, such as tutoring, classroom assistance, youth development or after-school programs.

The decision, led by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) under the Trump administration, officially ended funding for AmeriCorps in Michigan on April 25, 2025, the first state to be hit, which was followed by drastic cuts to all 50 states receiving federal funds.

About 85 percent of AmeriCorps full-time staff were placed on administrative leave, and 32,000 volunteers were immediately displaced, with many facing termination by late June. However, with 80 percent of the program’s initiatives axed by DOGE, the number of people losing their positions will likely be much higher.

“I’m hearing that AmeriCorps NCCC [National Civilian Community Corps] has fallen victim to the massacre of government programs,” posted Nicole Allen on Facebook. “I reflect on my own experience in the program, the 4000+ hours of service I completed ... I promise you, 20-year-olds making \$200/week are not the cause of our country’s financial crisis.”

Until late April, AmeriCorps operated in all 50 states, employing approximately 500 to 650 full-time staff members who supervised around 200,000 volunteers. Officially referred to as “volunteers” or “members,” these workers receive poverty-level wages in the form of stipends. Some receive health insurance, childcare or housing support. Young people largely “volunteer” for these low-wage, temporary positions due to a lack of decent job prospects. Even supervisors, including program coordinators and managers, typically only earn between \$35,000 and \$80,000 annually.

Exploiting the difficulties of finding jobs, the AmeriCorps

program deploys staffers to fill in the gaps due to the systematic underfunding of education, disaster relief, environmental remediation, or social supports. The elimination of these vital programs will devastate many communities.

AmeriCorps was officially established in 1993 through the National and Community Service Trust Act, signed into law by President Bill Clinton. It incorporates the VISTA program (Volunteers in Service to America, founded in 1965 as a domestic counterpart to the Peace Corps) and the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC).

The WWSW explained the explosion of volunteerism under George H.W. Bush and then Bill Clinton, following the drastic austerity years of the Reagan-Bush administration, in which tens of thousands of jobs were destroyed, the industrial Midwest turned into the “rust belt,” and dozens of communities were decimated.

Appealing to the sincere sentiments of the population and exploiting the massive growth of social inequality, the AmeriCorps program targeted young people who had no political or historical frame of reference, thinking they could “change social ills one good deed at a time.”

Since its inception, AmeriCorps, like the Peace Corps and VISTA, has provided cheap labor to enable non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and even religious charities to benefit from federal subsidies. With each successive administration, whether Democrat or Republican, demands for Americans to “volunteer” for “national service” have grown.

The *World Socialist Web Site* wrote as far back as 2008:

Every year, new initiatives were developed by both Democrats and Republicans to promote volunteerism while cutting social programs. These include naming the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday a day of national service; General Colin Powell establishing the President’s Summit for America’s Future to encourage volunteerism; and Clinton resuming Bush Sr.’s “Daily Points of Light Award.” In 2001, President George W. Bush went even further, launching his faith-based

community initiatives.

Poverty, as a policy, has never been pursued so aggressively (and successfully) as today. Those who are responsible for these policy decisions—tax cuts for the rich, shredding the social safety net, destruction of public education, etc.—tell the working class to volunteer!

Over the last 35 years, school districts, disaster aid non-profits, fire-prevention programs, food pantries and other charitable entities have all shed jobs and come to rely on super-exploited volunteer labor. The cuts to AmeriCorps will be the final blow to countless parts of the disappearing social safety net in the US.

The Mosaic in Action (Texas) lost a team that was set to contribute 2,000 hours to helping homeowners recover from natural disasters. A 2023 American Climate Corps initiative, which trained youth in clean energy and climate resilience, was shut down in January 2025. The cuts will end programs like the Forest Corps, which focused on wildfire and habitat protection. Programs aiding the homeless have been terminated in major urban centers like Chicago. AmeriCorps also helped staff larger organizations like Habitat for Humanity, Teach for America, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.

Nationally, AmeriCorps supplies more than 54,000 tutors, mentors, classroom assistants and reading and math specialists to schools and after-school programs. “I am heartbroken. And I feel betrayed. This can’t be our future. This is not a future that I want,” said a @_UWNNS_ on Instagram, who established the United Readers Program in Nevada.

“Anyone else feeling defeated and hopeless or just me? My program got cut last week and I have been filled with a mix of anger, sadness, and all around panic. I only have health insurance now until the end of the month and only 1 more living stipend check....” reads a post on the r/AmeriCorps subreddit. Others mention that as AmeriCorps “volunteers,” they are not eligible to collect unemployment insurance.

In Michigan, school mentoring and tutoring programs, administered by the Michigan Education Corps (MEC), will terminate at the end of the school year.

One former teacher who spoke with the *World Socialist Web Site* had retired after 30 years in the classroom, and then signed up to tutor through the Michigan MathCorps. She told us, “The future of the program and its continued operation is uncertain. While I think things will get better, it remains unclear if MEC will continue into the next school year due to the budget cuts and changes.”

“I think it is really robbing the youth of the future, both the students and educators. Students expressed sadness at the program changes and sudden educational departures. The program has so much value in providing essential educational support. I think it’s robbing the world and community,” she

said.

Michigan Education Corps volunteers were told to stop all activities immediately under the federal stop-work order. The order instructed grantees to halt any AmeriCorps-funded operations upon receipt of the notice. The Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) lost support for initiatives like Advise MI and the College Completion Corps, which helped students apply for college and financial aid, and access to the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award that can help pay for college or student loans.

The *Detroit Free Press* noted that from January 2024 to February 2025, “In Michigan, more than 7,900 AmeriCorps members and senior volunteers worked at more than 1,300 local service sites.” The federal funds invested totaled more than \$31.6 million, according to an AmeriCorps report, and “generated more than \$17.5 million in outside resources from businesses, foundations, public agencies, and other sources...”

These cuts affect programs in every state. Katie Loudin posted on Facebook, “My heart is heavy today. Over 200 AmeriCorps members have been cut from their volunteer positions across West Virginia.... [They] were tutoring struggling students in the afterschool programs in math and reading in Lewis County; they were connecting with youth, sourcing locally-grown food, and connecting it to local markets at Grow Ohio Valley; they were creating new pathways out of poverty and workforce training programs at High Rocks in the mountains; they were engaging isolated community members through meaningful programming at our senior centers; they were coordinating food pantries, affordable housing construction, economic resilience, and so much more ... feeling heartbroken.”



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact