

The local impact of Trump's AmeriCorps cuts

By Dillon Lowe

Late last month, AmeriCorps abruptly terminated \$400 million in grant funding and placed 85% of its staff on administrative leave as part of President Donald Trump's effort to significantly scale back federal programs and thin out the federal workforce. The move sent shockwaves across the country, as the grant funding supports thousands of nonprofits and civic institutions nationwide.

One Baton Rouge organization that has been hit hard by the cuts is [Serve Louisiana](#), Louisiana's longest-running AmeriCorps program.

Formed in 1991, Serve Louisiana takes on up to 37 full-time members each year who serve its partner organizations in Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Those members—typically students and seniors—serve in a variety of roles related to volunteer and program coordination. Local partner organizations include the East Baton Rouge Parish Library, the Mid City Redevelopment Alliance and a community farm and garden network called Baton Roots.

Maggie Conarro, Serve Louisiana's program director, tells *Daily Report* that the Trump administration's decision has forced her organization to offboard all of its current members.

"The proposed cuts to AmeriCorps would have a devastating impact on Serve Louisiana and the Baton Rouge community," Conarro says. "Our \$700,000 annual federal grant enables us to place 37 full-time AmeriCorps members at more than 18 local nonprofits—most of them right here in Baton Rouge."

According to Conarro, the local impact of AmeriCorps funding cannot be overstated.

"What makes this public-private partnership uniquely effective is its co-funding model," she says. "Each AmeriCorps member is jointly supported by a local nonprofit. That means federal dollars are directly leveraging local investment. ... In fact, the return on

investment for AmeriCorps is estimated at \$37 for every \$1 spent, making it not just a moral imperative, but an economic one.”

Conarro also notes that Serve Louisiana’s reach extends well beyond immediate service, as many of its members go on to become community leaders themselves.

“The loss of AmeriCorps would reverberate across the business sector,” she says. “Our members receive extensive professional development and often go on to hold leadership roles in local organizations. AmeriCorps isn’t just supporting today’s services. It’s developing tomorrow’s leaders.”

Serve Louisiana has filed a lawsuit in Baton Rouge federal court in an effort to suspend the Trump administration’s order, but the effectiveness of that effort remains to be seen.

What is AmeriCorps, and why is Trump slashing its funding?

AmeriCorps is a federal agency established in 1993 with a focus on service and volunteerism. The agency enrolls over 200,000 Americans to serve community organizations each year. AmeriCorps supports some 3,100 members in Louisiana, according to Volunteer Louisiana.

The slashing of AmeriCorps’ funding was spearheaded by Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency. The April 25 notice from the Trump administration that announced the cuts contended that AmeriCorps’ grants no longer fit the agency’s priorities but offered no explanation as to why that might be the case. The White House alleges AmeriCorps has “failed eight consecutive audits” and that over \$45 million in “unaccounted-for payments” were identified in 2024 alone.

AmeriCorps’ annual budget is about \$1 billion, meaning the \$400 million in cuts equates to roughly 40% of the agency’s budget.

State and local governments both red and blue have sued to block the cuts. Notably, a federal judge in California late last week [issued a temporary restraining order](#) pausing further implementation of Trump’s executive order directing federal agencies, including AmeriCorps, to begin major reorganizations. That judge sided with plaintiffs who argued that Trump’s effort to “radically restructure and dismantle the federal government” violates the U.S. Constitution.

Conarro, however, says she hasn't received any word on what that restraining order might mean for Serve Louisiana.

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