

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 6843

To amend the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to establish an Office of Civic Bridgebuilding within the Corporation for National and Community Service, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 25, 2022

Mr. KILMER (for himself, Mr. BARR, Mrs. MCBATH, Mr. TIMMONS, Mr. JEFFRIES, Mr. REED, Mr. COURTNEY, Mr. KATKO, Mr. JONES, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. UPTON, Mr. DEUTCH, Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN, Mrs. MURPHY of Florida, Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. PHILLIPS, and Mr. BACON) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To amend the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to establish an Office of Civic Bridgebuilding within the Corporation for National and Community Service, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Building Civic Bridges
5 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING.**

2 Subtitle H of title I of the National and Community
3 Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12653 et seq.) is amended
4 by adding at the end the following:

5 **“PART VI—CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING**

6 **“SEC. 198T. OFFICE OF CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING.**

7 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT AND DUTIES.—Subject to the
8 requirements of section 195(b), the Chief Executive Offi-
9 cer of the Corporation may designate an Officer of Civic
10 Bridgebuilding within the Corporation to administer an
11 Office of Civic Bridgebuilding (in this section referred to
12 as the ‘Office’) to carry out the following:

13 “(1) Administer the grant program described in
14 subsection (c) to support civic bridgebuilding across
15 the Nation, including establishing standardized cri-
16 teria to track the effectiveness of projects and activi-
17 ties funded under such program, which shall be
18 based on principles of scientific research.

19 “(2) Support the Corporation in providing
20 training in civic bridgebuilding skills and techniques
21 (with the consideration and input of best practices
22 collected by the Office)—

23 “(A) for participants (including individuals
24 who have been selected to be participants) of a
25 program receiving assistance under a national
26 service law; and

1 “(B) upon request, for an organization
2 that receives assistance under a national service
3 law or that is carrying out a program in which
4 participants described in subparagraph (A) are
5 participating.

6 “(3) Select the members of the Advisory Com-
7 mittee under subsection (b).

8 “(4) Support research and evaluations on civic
9 bridgebuilding and the dissemination of that infor-
10 mation, including through—

11 “(A) evaluation and oversight of the grant
12 program described in subsection (c);

13 “(B) collaboration (including through the
14 evaluation of the activities of the Corporation
15 relating to civic bridgebuilding and civic en-
16 gagement) between the Office and other offices
17 (such as the Office of Research and Evalua-
18 tion), teams, or individuals within the Corpora-
19 tion as the Corporation determines necessary;
20 and

21 “(C) the creation of a public research base
22 that monitors national metrics for civic
23 bridgebuilding and convenes research focused
24 on evaluating the extent to which civic
25 bridgebuilding and civic engagement activities

1 strengthen or weaken such bridgebuilding and
2 engagement in the United States.

3 “(5) Activate a public conversation about the
4 importance of civic bridgebuilding by convening and
5 coordinating civic bridgebuilding programs, pro-
6 viding resources, networking, and collaboration op-
7 portunities to the field, which may include—

8 “(A) network cultivation to strengthen the
9 community of those involved, interested, or en-
10 gaged in the civic bridgebuilding field, including
11 through activities such as—

12 “(i) in-person and virtual events for
13 the public to showcase impactful practices,
14 bring civic bridgebuilding leaders together,
15 present relevant research, and explore
16 emerging civic bridgebuilding needs;

17 “(ii) organizing peer-learning opportu-
18 nities to facilitate conversations within the
19 field of civic bridgebuilding;

20 “(iii) organizing and distributing lists
21 of civic bridgebuilding leaders, organiza-
22 tions, and groups in the civic
23 bridgebuilding field; and

24 “(iv) coordinating national commu-
25 nications among civic bridgebuilding lead-

1 ers, including through the promotion of
2 civic bridgebuilding programs and sharing
3 stories of local impact; and

4 “(B) developing or distributing resources
5 to expand best practices in the civic
6 bridgebuilding field, including through—

7 “(i) the curation of a digital resource
8 hub focused on sharing resources from en-
9 tities that receive grants under subsection
10 (c), other civic bridgebuilding leaders and
11 programs, or the research base; and

12 “(ii) the production of new resources,
13 trainings, or best practices based on
14 learnings from the civic bridgebuilding
15 field.

16 “(b) ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—

17 “(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established
18 within the Office of Civic Bridgebuilding an Advi-
19 sory Committee (in this subsection referred to as the
20 ‘Committee’).

21 “(2) MEMBERS.—

22 “(A) SELECTION.—The Officer of Civic
23 Bridgebuilding shall select 9 members of an Ad-
24 visory Committee, including a Chairperson of
25 the Committee, and ensure that such Com-

1 mittee is comprised of civic bridgebuilding lead-
2 ers who represent diverse ideological, religious,
3 racial, regional, or ethnic communities, and
4 with relevant experience and expertise from the
5 civic bridgebuilding field.

6 “(B) TERMS OF SERVICE.—A member of
7 the Committee shall serve for a term of 3 years.

8 “(3) DUTIES.—The Advisory Committee shall
9 carry out the following:

10 “(A) Provide advice and consultation to
11 the Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding on the prior-
12 ities and administration of such Office.

13 “(B) Conduct an annual review of grants
14 awarded under subsection (c), with a focus to
15 diversity, equity, and inclusion, and identifying
16 any gaps or needs that emerged from previous
17 application cycles.

18 “(C) Conduct an annual review of the
19 process of awarding grants under subsection
20 (c), including rubrics or metrics for grant selec-
21 tion used by the Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding.

22 “(D) Review the analysis provided under
23 the peer review process under subsection (c)(5).

24 “(e) CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING PILOT GRANT PRO-
25 GRAM.—

1 “(1) IN GENERAL.—From the amounts appro-
2 priated to carry out this subsection, the Corporation
3 (acting through the Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding
4 and in consultation with the Advisory Committee es-
5 tablished under subsection (b)) shall carry out a
6 pilot program for a 3-year period (with the possi-
7 bility of renewal for additional 3-year periods) to
8 award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible enti-
9 ties to support civic bridgebuilding programs across
10 the Nation.

11 “(2) GRANT PERIOD.—A grant awarded under
12 this subsection shall be for a 1-year period. There
13 shall be 3 grant cycles under the 3-year pilot pro-
14 gram.

15 “(3) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a
16 grant under this subsection, an eligible entity shall
17 submit an application to the Corporation at such
18 time, in such manner, and containing such informa-
19 tion as the Corporation may require, including—

20 “(A) a description of the project that will
21 be funded with the grant;

22 “(B) an assurance that such project will—

23 “(i) provide evidence of engaging di-
24 verse communities;

1 “(ii) facilitate the creation or endur-
2 ance of civic bridgebuilding or address the
3 root causes of polarization as articulated in
4 the research base;

5 “(iii) cite research supporting the effi-
6 cacy and impact of the proposed approach
7 for the project; and

8 “(iv) ensure physical, social, and psy-
9 chological safety for all participants in-
10 volved in the project and provide a descrip-
11 tion of evidence-based best practices for
12 how this goal will be achieved; and

13 “(C) an assurance that the eligible entity
14 will report outcomes of such project to track ef-
15 fectiveness based on standardized criteria estab-
16 lished by the Office of Civic Bridgebuilding
17 under subsection (a)(1) or will evaluate the im-
18 pact of such project based on principles of sci-
19 entific research.

20 “(4) USES OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity re-
21 ceiving a grant under this subsection shall use such
22 grant to carry out a project to advance civic
23 bridgebuilding in communities across the Nation or
24 address the root causes of polarization as articulated
25 in the research base.

1 “(5) PEER REVIEW PROCESS.—The Corporation
2 shall establish a peer review process which shall in-
3 clude consultation with research communities in the
4 civic bridgebuilding field to analyze the process of
5 awarding grants (and the grants that are awarded)
6 under this subsection.

7 “(d) COMPTROLLER GENERAL.—The Comptroller
8 General of the United States shall, on an annual basis,
9 submit to Congress a report, which summarizes and as-
10 sesses the effectiveness and impact of the activities carried
11 out under grants awarded under subsection (c).

12 “(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

13 “(1) CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING.—The term ‘civic
14 bridgebuilding’—

15 “(A) means activities that foster respect
16 between diverse communities, strengthen rela-
17 tionships across lines of difference, and forge a
18 sense of common civic purpose, and which seeks
19 to solve community problems and diminish po-
20 larization; and

21 “(B) includes—

22 “(i) activities that take place in local
23 communities, where individuals and insti-
24 tutions come together to build empathy,

1 strengthen belonging, and address local
2 issues; and

3 “(ii) activities at the field level, where
4 civic bridgebuilding leaders work together
5 to share research and best practices, learn
6 from one another, and grow civic
7 bridgebuilding efforts.

8 “(2) CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING LEADER.—The
9 term ‘civic bridgebuilding leader’ means an indi-
10 vidual who leads civic bridgebuilding programs or ef-
11 forts.

12 “(3) CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING PROGRAM.—The
13 term ‘civic bridgebuilding program’ means a pro-
14 gram, project, or activity which embodies or works
15 to achieves the goals of civic bridgebuilding.

16 “(4) CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.—The term ‘civic en-
17 gagement’ means an individual or collective action
18 designed to address a public concern or an unmet
19 human, educational, health care, environmental, or
20 public safety need.

21 “(5) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible en-
22 tity’ means a nonprofit entity, public institution, ele-
23 mentary school, secondary school, institution of
24 higher education, religious group, or consortium of
25 any such entities.

1 “(6) PUBLIC INSTITUTION.—The term ‘public
2 institution’ means a library, unit of local govern-
3 ment, or other entity expending public funds or per-
4 forming public functions.

5 “(7) RESEARCH.—The term ‘research’ means
6 research which embodies principles of scientific re-
7 search.

8 “(8) RESEARCH BASE.—The term ‘research
9 base’ means any publications that contain observa-
10 tions, analysis, and conclusions based on principles
11 of scientific research with respect to the challenges
12 of political and social polarization in the United
13 States, and practical approaches to strengthen social
14 cohesion, foster a sense of national connection, or
15 improve intergroup relations in divided communities.

16 “(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
17 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
18 \$25,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2023 through 2025.”.

19 **SEC. 3. TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

20 The table of contents in section 1(b) of the National
21 and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12501
22 note) is amended by inserting at the end of the item relat-
23 ing to subtitle H of title I, the following:

“PART VI—CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING

“Sec. 198T. Office of Civic Bridgebuilding.”.

