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Kennedy Serve America Act to Benefit Communities through AmeriCorps Expansion: LISC

NEW YORK (April 21, 2009)—The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009 should have a significant positive impact on disinvested communities and help raise the standard of living for the low-income residents who live there, according to the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the leading national organization supporting community revitalization.

The law, signed by President Obama today, will expand the highly successful AmeriCorps program by adding five new service “corps” focused on education, health, clean energy, veterans and opportunities for the economically disadvantaged. In addition, it streamlines funding for AmeriCorps; creates service learning options for youth; and establishes new programs aimed at nonprofit capacity-building, social innovation grants and volunteer recruitment.

“Now is the time to invest in our communities if we are to help them recover from decline,” said Michael Rubinger, LISC president and CEO. “AmeriCorps can be a critical piece of that. Given current economic pressures, the need is greater than ever.

“We are particularly excited that the President plans to nominate Maria Eitel as AmeriCorps’ new CEO,” Rubinger continued. “Her long experience spearheading NIKE’s corporate social responsibility efforts and as head of the NIKE Foundation give her unique insight into the value and impact of community service.”

LISC has been an AmeriCorps sponsor since 1994 and has taken a unique approach to the program—drawing volunteers of all ages and backgrounds from the struggling communities where it works. LISC has placed nearly 1,700 members with community-based nonprofits around the country over the last 15 years, many of whom have gone on to careers in community development.

“Low-income residents can improve their quality of life and more fully participate in the economic mainstream if community-based organizations have access to the right people with the right financial, technical and management tools to help make it happen. AmeriCorps members support the nonprofit groups and programs that are leading that effort,” Rubinger said.

Indeed, the five new service corps are a good match for LISC’s *Building Sustainable Communities* agenda, which takes a comprehensive approach to revitalizing distressed

neighborhoods. LISC focuses on five key areas: investing in affordable housing and other real estate; helping families stabilize their finances and build their assets; expanding access to quality schools; promoting healthy lifestyles and environments; and supporting economic development. As part of those goals, LISC also has a Homeless Veterans Initiative focused on affordable housing for vets, a service learning effort that supports youth engagement in their communities and a Green Development Center that develops environmentally sound building approaches and educates nonprofits about how to implement them. All three closely track the Kennedy Serve America Act priorities.

“We applaud the Congress and President Obama for this important piece of legislation,” Rubinger said. “The Kennedy Serve America Act not only benefits the communities where volunteers will work, but it also expands the pipeline of new community development professionals that AmeriCorps has long helped build. Long-term, that strengthens our national community development capacity with individuals eager to make a difference.”

About LISC

LISC combines corporate, government and philanthropic resources to help nonprofit community development corporations revitalize distressed neighborhoods. Since 1980, LISC has raised more than \$9 billion to build or rehab more than 244,000 affordable homes and develop 36 million square feet of retail, community and educational space nationwide. LISC support has leveraged nearly \$28 billion in total development activity. For more information, visit www.lisc.org.