

credibility implied by the invitation to speak. On the contrary, all members of a university community have a responsibility to ensure that the halls of learning do not become an echo chamber for the spread of disinformation in the name of free speech.

## Squandering Volunteerism

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**I**n January 2002, when President Bush called on Americans to commit at least two years or 4,000 hours of service to neighbor and nation, he was widely applauded. After September 11, Americans rushed to find ways to help—to the point that the Red Cross had to turn away donors, and Salvation Army warehouses in New York City overflowed into the streets.

This public desire to address our national vulnerabilities was just waiting to be tapped. But in the weeks and months that followed, the administration faced a problem known to every itinerant preacher: all the charisma in the world will do little good if you get people all riled up and then have no church for them to join. The administration hasn't institutionalized citizens' desire to serve, and now that desire is fading away.

To be fair, Bush hired some very good people to head his new drive. The USA Freedom Corps set up a tiny headquarters, published a brochure, and created a neat website, but it hasn't organized a new army of volunteers. Many observers claim that the main difficulty was that Congress appropriated only about \$25 million for the new drive instead of the \$230 million the White House requested. Local organizers complain that they can get little seed money and that what they can get is slow in coming. All this is true. But as I see it, the problem lies elsewhere.

The program created to recruit volunteers in the area of homeland security—the Citizen Corps, a sort of national version of the neighborhood watch program—was buried.

The Corps is supposed to provide training for many thousands in advanced first aid, assisting fire fighters, organizing evacuations, and patrolling important public assets, armed only with communication devices. They would be the voluntary troops of homeland protection. (My support does not extend to the controversial—now discarded—component of the program called Terrorism Information and Prevention System, or TIPS. Spying on friends and neighbors, which is what TIPS essentially would have involved, should definitely not be encouraged. We should serve as arms and legs of homeland protection, not “eyes and ears.” Because the latter is so against the American grain, it would undermine the whole drive.)

Even after several meetings with the officials involved, I still don't understand why the administration hid the new program under the Freedom Corps umbrella, which includes the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and other worthy corps that have nothing to do with homeland protection.

In recruiting volunteers, the government hasn't distinguished between homeland security and other purposes, as if—as we anticipate new terrorist attacks—it makes no difference if you're asked to serve as a teacher's aide or a firefighter, to patrol a classroom or the town's water resources. Federal Emergency Management Agency representatives explicitly argue that it makes no difference if people are asked to stand by to help for a flood, an earthquake, or a bunch of terrorists.

Americans volunteer much more than the citizens of any other nation in the world. To get them to volunteer still more—on the homeland security front—requires channeling whatever is left of that special motivation generated by September 11. Citizen Corps was created to do that—a worthy idea that ought to be pursued more seriously.

Americans need to be trained as volunteer firefighters and medics, and asked to give an evening each week and one weekend day a month to patrolling the main resources of their city, from electric power plants to harbors. Homeland protection needs millions of people to protect vital assets; we simply cannot afford to pay to protect all areas of our nation the way we do for our airlines.

Bush's call to service was a good start, but what we need now is for the Department of Homeland Security to tell us where to line up, what to do, and how to follow through.



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