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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

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MEMORANDUM

TO: All House Members

FROM: Representative Michael F. Gerber *MFG*

DATE: December 22, 2010

SUBJECT: Co-Sponsorship Memo: PennCorps

In the coming weeks I plan to introduce legislation which will establish and fund the PennCorps program. The goal of this legislation is to:

1. Make secondary education more affordable
2. Increase the level of public service among young adults
3. Strengthen our communities
4. Reduce Pennsylvania's "brain drain"

The legislation will achieve these four goals by providing \$10,000 in loan forgiveness for students who dedicate at least one year of public service to any Pennsylvania based AmeriCorps program, such as City Year or Teach for America. The state funding will be in addition to the federal award a student will receive.

It has become increasingly clear that such a program is needed on many fronts.

Making education more affordable:

Tuition and fees at an average state university have risen so significantly in recent years that the median debt load for public college graduates is \$15,500; for students from private colleges the amount is \$19,500. As we have learned from the recent credit crisis, it is unreasonable for the next generation of Pennsylvania's leaders, workers and entrepreneurs to start out under such crushing debt.

Increasing the level of public service among young adults:

Fostering an ethic of obligation among our young adults and engaging their desire to serve the common good will not only help improve our communities, but create a shared sense of purpose among a whole generation of students.

Strengthening our communities:

One of the more tangible aspects of this proposal is that it will engage a new generation and teach them to use service as a means to solve problems. AmeriCorps volunteers have served as tutors in the most challenging school districts, provided victims of crime help in navigating the legal system, operated after school programs, helped more than 200,000 seniors live independently, planted 52 million trees and created 40,000 "safe zones" in neighborhoods and schools. These actions can help turn around a number of our communities and serve as a model for bottom up problem solving.

Slowing the "brain drain":

Finally, such a proposal will help keep young adults in Pennsylvania. Not only will they be required to commit to their year of service in Pennsylvania, but such service will bind them to the communities they serve.

If you wish to co-sponsor this legislation, please contact Melanie Brown in my office at mabrown@pahouse.net or 787-9475.