



Feinstein-Domenici Offer Bill to Create Healthy Forests Youth Conservation Corps April 1, 2004

Washington, DC – U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Pete Domenici (R-N.M.) today announced legislation to create a national youth corps that would partner with public land management agencies to restore and protect public lands and engage disadvantaged young people with their communities. Senators Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Mark Dayton (D-Minn.) are also cosponsors.

“As Mayor of San Francisco, I helped found the first urban youth corps in 1983. In the 21 years since the program began, it has given thousands of corps members a sense of personal pride, helped to connect them with their community and see for themselves that hard work pays off,” Senator Feinstein said. **“This bill would replicate the corps on a national level and give disadvantaged young people across the country the same opportunities that San Franciscans have had for two decades.”**

“For years, we have been working to find better ways of improving forest health so we can try to avoid the catastrophic fires that have ruined millions of acres. Allowing youth corps to be more proactive in healthy forest work is something we should have already done. There are multiple benefits for the kids and also for the ultimate goal of making our forests safer,” said Domenici, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee chairman.

Land management agencies are charged with conserving, protecting, and maintaining millions of acres of public land, which requires a substantial amount of human and material resources.

The youth corps would allow young people—particularly those who are minorities, low-income, or at risk of dropping out of high school—to connect with their communities and to learn skills that could lead to jobs or encourage interest in higher education.

Specifically, this bill would aid public land management efforts by:

- Allowing the Agriculture and Interior Secretaries to enter into agreements with existing state, local, and non-profit youth conservation corps to carry out land management initiatives on public lands;
- Directing the Secretaries to give priority for projects that will reduce hazardous fuels on public land, rehabilitate land affected or altered by fire, work to address land where trees have been blown down or are at high risk of reburn, restore land located in near municipal watersheds and municipal water supplies, assess lands afflicted or imminently threatened

by disease or insect infestation, provide emergency assistance and disaster relief to communities;

- Permitting the Secretaries to grant non-competitive hiring status to Corps alumni for future Federal hiring; and
- Authorizing \$25 million for the program for Fiscal Years 2005 - 2009.

Senator Feinstein, last year, offered a similar provision to the Senate version of Healthy Forest legislation, which was ultimately stripped out of the final version of the law.

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