



Thursday, Jul. 17, 2008

## The Service Agenda

By Richard Stengel, Managing Editor

It is a unique moment for the idea of national service. You have two presidential candidates who believe deeply in service and who have made it part of their core message to voters. You have millions of Americans who are yearning to be more involved in the world and in their communities. You have corporations and businesses that are making civic engagement a key part of their mission.

Last September, our cover story "The Case for National Service" caused an outpouring of interest in and support for citizen service across the country. This year, in addition to publishing another issue on the idea of service, we are convening--along with the Carnegie Corporation of New York and with presenters AARP and Target--a national bipartisan summit in New York City that will bring together hundreds of leading Americans to plan and lay out a bold blueprint on citizen service. The event will start on the evening of Sept. 11--that solemn anniversary seemed an appropriate time to launch this effort--and the meeting itself will occur the next day, Sept. 12. The summit will also be the first major public event for ServiceNation, a national campaign of more than 100 organizations--ranging from AARP to the National Council of La Raza and Habitat for Humanity--that collectively represent some 100 million Americans. My co-chairs at the summit will be Alma Powell, Caroline Kennedy, Carnegie president Vartan Gregorian and AARP CEO Bill Novelli. The summit will be opened by New York City mayor Mike Bloomberg, who himself is an exemplar of citizen service, and will be closed by California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is the first governor to create a cabinet post to oversee service and volunteering.

To kick off the summit, ServiceNation has invited Senators John McCain and Barack Obama to a presidential forum on service. The purpose of the forum is to give both candidates a chance to discuss their views on citizenship and sketch out their ideas for the role of service in America.

All the partners are keen to make the summit a place for not only dialogue but also action. To that end, ServiceNation is working with Senators Ted Kennedy and Orrin Hatch on legislation designed to expand opportunities for volunteering and national service. ServiceNation will urge the next President and Congress to enact that legislation by Sept. 11, 2009. Two weeks after the summit, ServiceNation will engage tens of thousands of Americans in hundreds of events across the country in a national Day of Action to highlight the benefits and goals of citizen service.

### A Campaign Conversation

Two weeks ago, we presented dueling essays by the presidential candidates on the nature of patriotism. This

week, Senators Obama and McCain face off on their strategies for Afghanistan. Their essays inaugurate a regular feature called In Their Words, in which the candidates will share a page and debate an issue of our choosing. Every week, we give you great reporting and analysis on the presidential campaign, but now we're also offering you the unvarnished and unfiltered views of the candidates so you can compare them side by side.

Richard Stengel, MANAGING EDITOR

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