



Roosevelt Scholars Act

What is the Roosevelt Scholars Act?

The Roosevelt Scholars Act would create a new program modeled after the military ROTC program to incentivize more of the talented young people our government needs to enter the federal civil service. The ROTC program has proven to be highly successful in generating top talent in the military; a similar model should be followed for our civilian federal workforce. Our federal government faces an unprecedented workforce crisis as experienced workers begin to retire and the pipeline of talent available to replace them continues to thin.

The Roosevelt Scholars program would provide full tuition, support for room and board, and a stipend for graduate study in occupations critical to our government's success. In exchange for this support, Roosevelt Scholars would complete an internship with a federal agency and, upon graduation, would be expected to complete a minimum of three years of federal service. A Roosevelt Scholars Foundation would be established to administer all aspects of the Roosevelt Scholars program.

Roosevelt Scholars Foundation

A nonprofit Roosevelt Scholars Foundation, named after the father of the modern civil service, Theodore Roosevelt, would be established by Congress to administer the application, selection and ongoing support aspects of a new government-wide Roosevelt Scholarship to fund graduate-level study in exchange for a federal service commitment in targeted mission-critical occupational areas. The Foundation and scholarship program would help restore prestige to federal service by raising awareness about federal opportunities and rebranding the government as a place where the best and brightest go to make a difference.

Application and Selection Process for Roosevelt Scholars

The program would be open to all individuals applying to or enrolled in an accredited full-time graduate degree program in a discipline that corresponds to a list of mission-critical occupational areas established annually by the Foundation. The application process would be two-pronged, to include an institutional level review and nomination by an appropriate faculty coordinator, as well as a national review and interview process. The exact number of awardees would likely vary from year to year depending on available funding.

Financial and Professional Support, Placement, and Service Requirement for Roosevelt Scholars

Roosevelt Scholars would receive tuition, support for room and board, and a stipend for each year they are enrolled full-time in their graduate degree program. Total annual awards are not to exceed \$60,000 in 2008 dollars. Roosevelt Scholars receiving support from other scholarship programs would not be allowed to duplicate support. In exchange for this backing, each Scholar would complete at least one substantive internship with a federal agency, during which time Roosevelt Scholars would also be expected to participate in cohort-based orientation, development and networking activities. Upon graduation, Roosevelt Scholars would be expected to fulfill a minimum of three years of federal service. Scholars completing MDs or PhDs would be expected to complete an additional year of service for each year of support beyond three years up to a maximum of five years.

Roosevelt Scholars would enter federal service under a two year excepted appointment authority with the possibility of an extension for one additional year upon prior approval. Upon determination that an individual appointed under this authority meets all qualification, suitability, and performance requirements, the employing

agency must noncompetitively appoint the Roosevelt Scholars to a full-time, permanent position in the competitive service. Though the Foundation would provide extensive networking opportunities, informational sessions, and other placement assistance, Scholars would hold ultimate responsibility for securing their federal internships and jobs. Any Scholar failing to complete their federal service requirements in full would be required to repay the corresponding portion of financial support.

Why It's a Good Idea

Roosevelt Scholars builds upon a proven model of excellence from the military. A combined two-fifths of U.S. military officers are products of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), who receive federal support for education in exchange for their military service. Almost everyone agrees that investing to meet the needs of our military is wise. The Roosevelt Scholars Program brings a similar commitment and investment in our civilian service.

Roosevelt Scholars will help government attract mission-critical talent. The federal government's brain drain is underway. Roughly one-third of the government's top scientists, engineers, physicians, mathematicians, economists and other highly specialized professionals will be leaving in the next five years. According to a study by the Partnership for Public Service, federal agencies will need to fill 193,000 mission-critical positions by 2009. The labor needs of the federal government are becoming more professional and specialized than ever before. Unfortunately, the same is true of the overall U.S. labor market and an insufficient number of citizens are pursuing graduate-level study in high-need areas including science, technology, nursing, public health, foreign languages and engineering. As a result, the market for highly skilled workers continues to tighten and the federal government increasingly needs to compete with other sectors for the same, limited talent pool.

Roosevelt Scholars makes government service possible for more Americans. Rising education costs are pricing our best-schooled citizens out of public service jobs. Those completing master's degrees average \$32,900 in debt. Individuals earning doctorates and MBAs average \$41,500 and \$41,700 respectively in educational debt. Those studying to be lawyers incur an average of \$80,800 in debt, and those receiving MDs average \$125,800 in student loan debt.¹ Tuition assistance is a proven recruiting tool. It is perhaps the most straightforward, proven instrument in the government's recruiting toolbox.

Roosevelt Scholars will complement existing efforts and structures that encourage young people to consider public service. One prominent federal scholarship program, the Armed Forces Health Professions Scholarship Program, currently covers full tuition, school-related expenses and a stipend for medical school students in exchange for a service commitment. This program has proven to be the largest source of doctors for our military. The success of this program suggests that this model should succeed in helping our government fill mission-critical positions in other fields. Roosevelt Scholars builds on this and other existing agency scholarship programs by presenting economies of scale and an opportunity for cross-agency information sharing and collaboration to identify and target the skills areas of greatest need. Furthermore, like other highly successful and prestigious fellowship models including the Truman, Rhodes, Goldwater, Marshall, and Fulbright, the Roosevelt Scholars model would leverage one of our nation's greatest resources – our unparalleled network of colleges and universities.²

Roosevelt Scholars could help to re-brand government service. The knowledge gap about federal service continues its decades-long expansion. In a recent survey by the Partnership for Public Service, only 13 percent of college students said they were extremely or very knowledgeable about federal service. Ultimately, the Roosevelt Scholarship and the efforts of the Roosevelt Scholars Foundation will serve as a keystone along with other important efforts on the part of federal agencies, institutions of higher education, and nonprofits to strengthen the government's pipeline of critical skills. Taken together, these efforts are important to drawing greater public attention to the importance of federal work, and to restoring prestige to federal service.

¹ Figures are from 2003-2004 data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/npsas>

² The Roosevelt Scholars Program differs from existing elite fellowships in its explicit focus on federal government service in exchange for graduate degree support.