

Group Proposes Scholarships to Fill Mission-Critical Jobs

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A nonprofit group on Thursday urged the government to offer graduate school scholarships to talented individuals who pledge federal service in return.

The Partnership for Public Service proposed the Roosevelt Scholars program at a town hall meeting and career fair at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, which was attended by more than 2,000 students currently interning at federal agencies and congressional offices.

The proposed program, named after Theodore Roosevelt, the president considered the father of the modern civil service, would provide graduate school scholarships to qualified individuals in exchange for two years of service to the government.

"Our notion is that we need to reignite the spirit of service in our country," said Max Stier, president of the Partnership. "We need to find a way to make government service yet another premier job choice and remind people that government service is the ultimate form of public service."



Stier said the proposal would require congressional approval. "To make this a reality, we will need a commitment from Congress to fund it appropriately," Stier said.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., attended Thursday's meeting and career fair, taking questions from students and Cokie Roberts, a commentator for ABC News and National Public Radio.

Hoyer said he began classes at the University of Maryland without a defined vision, dropping out in his third semester after earning low grades. But he said a convocation speech by President John F. Kennedy in 1959 changed his life, shifting his focus to government service and inspiring him to go to law school.

Kennedy "spoke about making our country a better place, and he spoke about the fact that young people could make a difference," Hoyer said. "Our country is challenged today, and we need your generation to change [that]."

According to the Partnership, one of those challenges is the need to replace hundreds of thousands of retiring federal workers over the next five years. The group's recently released report, *Where the Jobs Are*, estimates that the federal government must hire nearly 193,000 people to fill mission-critical jobs during the next two years, with much of the need in the areas of security and law enforcement.

Stier said the proposed scholarship program would be geared toward individuals with expertise in mission-critical fields such as technology, engineering and security. The government is in serious competition with the private sector for many of these job candidates, he added.

"The federal government today offers specialized opportunities for these occupations," Stier said. "Our point is that the government actually has a broader need for talent than these fellowships provide for."

Stier predicted that most scholarship recipients would stay in government longer than the two years that will likely be required. Mandating more than two years would likely discourage people from applying, he said.

Hoyer's speech was followed by a government career fair where 40 federal agencies set up booths to discuss employment opportunities with students. Agencies present included the CIA, the Government Accountability Office, and the Defense and State departments.