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FEDERAL DIARY

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A Scholarship and an Incentive

More than 1,800 summer interns at federal agencies, congressional offices and think tanks have registered to attend a "town hall" meeting tonight, where a nonprofit group will announce plans to create a Roosevelt Scholars program to attract graduate students to the federal government.

The proposed program, named for **Theodore Roosevelt**, the president widely considered to be the father of the modern civil service, would provide scholarships to pay for graduate school in exchange for a commitment to work for the government.

The initiative is being sponsored by the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service, which has sponsored an annual gathering of summer interns the past five years. Tonight's meeting, starting at 6:15 at the National Air and Space Museum, will include House Majority Leader **Steny H. Hoyer** (D-Md.) taking questions from **Cokie Roberts**, a commentator for ABC News and National Public Radio.

Max Stier, president of the partnership, said the scholarship program, which would be financed by the government, would require the approval of Congress. Although that could be an uphill battle, Stier said the proposal would provide a national program that complements scholarships that are typically aimed at certain fields and professions.

"We need to encourage top talent to pursue careers in mission-critical positions," Stier said. "Our notion is that there is a broader need and a broader opportunity to create a cohort of young people directed toward public service."

"There is no reason why Roosevelt Scholars shouldn't have as big an appeal as Rhodes Scholars," he said.

Stier and **John Bridgeland**, the head of Civic Enterprises and a former adviser to **President Bush**, drew up the Roosevelt Scholars proposal.

Their idea is the latest in a series of proposals aimed at luring the best and the brightest into government careers. Sens. **Hillary Rodham Clinton** (D-N.Y.) and **Arlen Specter** (R-Pa.) and Reps. **James P. Moran Jr.** (D-Va.) and **Christopher Shays** (R-Conn.), for example, have introduced bills to create a U.S. Public Service Academy.

The school, modeled after the U.S. military academies, would offer free education to about 5,000 undergraduates in exchange for their pledge to work for five years in local, state or federal government jobs. Roosevelt Scholars would be required to work in government two years for every year their tuition is paid for.

A recent report issued by the Partnership for Public

Service found that federal agencies will need to fill 193,000 jobs in the next two years. The hiring binge is being driven both by projections that thousands of employees will retire in the next five years and by homeland security requirements.

Tonight's meeting will be followed by a job fair, at which 40 federal agencies will have recruiters to explain employment opportunities. Agencies scheduled to send recruiters include the departments of Defense, State, Treasury and Justice, the Federal Aviation Administration, the CIA and the Peace Corps.

"The notion behind the job fair is that you have a whole cohort of young people who are talented and in Washington and don't know a heck of a lot about job opportunities in Washington," Stier said.

TSA Union Proposal Dropped

Democratic congressional leaders have backed away from a measure that would have granted union rights to airport security screeners.

Senate Majority Leader **Harry M. Reid** of Nevada announced that he and House Speaker **Nancy Pelosi** of California had decided to drop the collective bargaining provision from a bill that would implement unfinished recommendations of the 9/11 Commission in order to get the legislation moving toward the White House.

Senate Republicans had objected to the union provision, and the White House had threatened to veto the bill if it included the provision.

The decision is a blow to federal unions. Earlier this year, **John Gage**, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, stood with Sen. **Joseph I. Lieberman** (I-Conn.), the chief sponsor of the union provision, to praise Democrats for adding the provision to the 9/11 bill.

"The fight is not over," Gage said after Reid's announcement. "This only makes us more determined to get rights for workers who were wrongfully denied."

Colleen M. Kelley, president of the National Treasury Employees Union, said supporters are looking for other bills that could carry the union provision. "This is such a disappointment for many of these employees," she said.

In a statement, the Transportation Security Administration welcomed the decision and said, "TSA will continue to vigorously pursue activities in support of active employee engagement and a participative workforce."

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