

## **The Next Generation of Service: ICP's Executive Director Testifies Before Congress**

By Robin Taylor, ICP Intern

Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) Executive Director Susan Stroud testified before the Subcommittee on Healthy Family and Communities of the House Committee on Education and Labor on April 19, 2007 to discuss the potential for the next generation of national and community service. She was invited to testify based on her leadership in the national service community and ICP's efforts in creating the case for expanding service programming for middle-school aged students in the summer months. The hearing came in the same week as the April 17<sup>th</sup> introduction of the Summer of Service Act of 2007 into the House and Senate by Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Senators Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and Thad Cochran (R-MS).

As Stroud explained in her testimony, Summer of Service is a program that would enable young Americans to participate in service and service-learning the summer before entering high school. She cited ICP's report that points to the concern that middle school students have critical needs that are often overlooked, such as inadequate supervision from being too young to work but too old for many summer programs, and are faced with the sometimes difficult transition to high school. According to Stroud, the Summer of Service program for this age group would serve numerous purposes, including "teaching the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; helping young people learn about (and become connected to) their communities; forge common bonds across economic and ethnic groups through common experiences; and helping young people develop in a positive, healthy way."

Stroud's testimony also highlighted the importance of strengthening existing national service programs in order to create a continuum of service that would enable all age groups to engage in projects addressing critical national needs. She urged the subcommittee to allocate funding that would match historical levels of \$43 million for Learn and Serve America in order to create year-round engagement for students by expanding service-learning throughout the school year. She also emphasized the necessity of strengthening the AmeriCorps and SeniorCorps programs through knowledge sharing and research to secure the foundations for national service.

After speaking about existing programs, Stroud's testimony pointed to several new service proposals being developed by various institutions and organizations. Stroud noted that Pathways to Teaching, an ICP and University of Washington project, "would tap into the 500,000 current and past AmeriCorps members" to help fill teaching vacancies in high-shortage and low-income districts. Some of the other proposed programs of note include the AmeriCorps\*Civilian Conservation Corps, HealthCorps, Junior AmeriCorps, and National Public Service Academy.

Stroud concluded her testimony with recommendations on ensuring effective service program design and expanding these opportunities to all Americans. She pointed out that the benefits provided by quality service programs are needed in every community, and by all young people, to build a stronger and more inclusive nation. As Stroud noted, "We can, and should, provide every young American with the opportunity to serve his or her community and country."

To read the full text of Susan Stroud's written testimony, or to watch a video of the hearing, please visit ICP's website at <http://www.icicp.org/index.php?tg=articles&topics=379>.