

Idaho Capital Sun

Since 2015, Teach For America has reached 30,000 Idaho students. Deep cuts could hurt recruitment.

Awards help us recruit a more socio-economically diverse teaching force, which helps boost learning in underserved communities, writes guest columnist Tony Ashton.

BY [TONY ASHTON](#), NOVEMBER 27, 2023

Teach for America Idaho faces a potentially devastating blow to our programs should the U.S. Congress [enact the deep cuts](#) to the [AmeriCorps program](#) that are currently under consideration.

An important piece of [Teach For America Idaho](#)'s work focuses on improving the futures of Idaho youth, particularly those in rural communities. In a number of ways, AmeriCorps funding plays a key role in our programs.

Teach For America teachers are also AmeriCorps members. They can use Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards to pay for teacher certification or to pay down their existing student debt. Participation in AmeriCorps also enables them to defer their undergraduate loans for the first two years of teaching and have the interest, which accrues during those two years, paid off by the federal government.

These awards help us recruit a more socio-economically diverse teaching force, which helps boost student learning in underserved communities. If this significant benefit were to disappear, it would have a strongly negative impact on our recruiting efforts. Since launching in Idaho in 2015, Teach For America teachers have reached more than 30,000 Idaho students.

It has been Teach For America's experience that many individuals who want to serve, particularly as educators, are unable to do so. They face significant economic barriers, including high student debt and the cost of teacher certification, which make it difficult to enter a lower-paying profession such as teaching.

It's important that people understand that beyond the overwhelmingly positive impact Teach For America has on students, our AmeriCorps members also gain a great deal of knowledge and experience from working with us. They frequently turn that experience into careers.

Former Teach For America teachers now work in all echelons of our state's education system. Some are teachers, others are principals or school board members. Their experience in Idaho

classrooms, made possible in part by AmeriCorps, represents only the beginning of their contributions to education in our state.

Idaho's congressmen Rep. Russ Fulcher and Rep. Mike Simpson should know that Idahoans value the programming made possible by the presence of AmeriCorps in our state.

Reducing its footprint would harm the people who need its services most. It is truly a hidden gem in the Gem State.