



**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES,  
IAMAW, AFL-CIO**



**NFFE-IAM Opposes Closure of the Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers**

**Position:** For 55 years, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) operates 25 Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Job Corps centers through the U.S. Forest Service. The centers are staffed by Forest Service employees. The CCC program serves a dual purpose: 1) It cares for the health of our forests, and 2) It provides essential job training opportunities in rural communities near national forests. In addition, the CCC program trains at-risk youth with career vocations and the technical education needed to get jobs in fields of high demand. The program serves as a major deterrent to youth homelessness and prevents entry into criminal justice or mental health systems. 80% of CCC graduates go on to community college, full employment, or the military. The CCC program at USDA provides futures to young people while delivering millions of hours of trail maintenance, forest firefighting, and disaster recovery support at no additional cost to the taxpayer.

While Congress recognizes the CCC program as an effective youth employment program and an excellent use of taxpayers' dollars, the program is under attack by those who are supposed to support it.

- *The Trump administration:* Each year, President Trump zeros-out the budget for the CCC program with little explanation. The budget cites outdated facts and figures, however the CCC program occupies the top levels of performance and outputs for the entire Job Corps program.
- *USDA Secretary Sonny Purdue:* Secretary Purdue is quietly closing CCC program centers without explanation. Recently, he closed the highest performing center in the program (Centennial) without any forethought how to train students as firefighters for this fire season. He continues to abuse this authority originally intended for poor performing centers by moving to close centers without the consultation of Congress or other stakeholders.
- *The Department of Labor:* The Department of Labor (DOL) unfortunately holds the purse for the entire Job Corps program. DOL is guilty of mismanagement of the Job Corps program at both DOL and USDA, especially hurting the CCC program by intentionally starving it of new students and proper funding. A 2013 DOL Inspector General report cited major DOL mismanagement and obstruction of funds to the USDA CCC program.

In spite of these attempts to disrupt and end the CCC program, CCC students provided nearly 400,000 hours of firefighting services in 2018. In 2017, students provided 5000 hours of support in response to Hurricane Harvey, 4000 hours treating 35,000 acres of prescribed fire to prevent forest fires, and 10,000 hours of forest restoration work. With disasters getting worse and more frequent, now is not the time to reduce responders for wildfires, hurricanes, and floods.

**WE REQUEST:**

1. **Support 2020 Senate language prohibiting DOL from arbitrarily reducing CCC funding.**
2. **Close the WIOA loophole that allows the USDA Secretary to autonomously close centers.** This authority was originally reserved for poor performing centers. It is being exploited and used for political gain without regard to center performance or function (firefighting, etc.).
3. **Enhance transparency and accountability with direct funding to the U.S. Forest Service.** DOL has mismanaged Job Corps and stated it wants out of the CCC program. We agree.

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