

Hard Times are No Excuse

**72 percent of Americans have cut back on civic action,
which includes time spent volunteering**

The president and First Lady have asked Americans to volunteer — informally and through the new Serve America Act, which will take effect on Oct. 1. There are many ways to help, but most important, the Obamas have simply said, “Get involved!”

Volunteerism is a thread that runs throughout our country’s history. But even with the White House call to action, this thread is beginning to fray.

According to a report from the National Conference on Citizenship, in the midst of the recession 72 percent of Americans have cut back on civic participation, which includes the time spent volunteering. Two thirds say that Americans are responding to the economic downturn by helping themselves. And while half have given food or money to charitable causes, the numbers suggest that the American tradition of volunteering is stalling.

What I’m seeing both at home and abroad is that people want to pitch in, but they are finding it harder to do so in a difficult economic environment.

To stop the unraveling, corporate America has an obligation and a unique ability to step up. The time is now.

Having led teams of employees for decades, I’ve long subscribed to the idea of “servant leadership.” It’s a simple idea that recognizes that good leaders should serve their followers, not the other way around. Companies

now have a great opportunity to take this spirit of servitude beyond their corporate walls and into their communities.

As with other large social initiatives, companies have the resources to make a positive societal impact. Our organizational resources and ability to market and deliver products can be applied in many creative ways to make a difference in our communities. In fact, multinational companies are especially well equipped to have a profound impact. Bottom line, we have the where-withal and the know-how to help reignite the passion of volunteerism — beginning with our own employees.

Volunteering benefits the individual, the Company, and society. It empowers employees to share their talents. It builds character, leadership capabilities, and new skills, and fosters cross-cultural understanding. This creates stronger, more well-rounded individuals. For the Company, this means a higher-performing, more committed workforce. More important, for society, the power of volunteerism unites people and restores hope to those in need.

In good times and bad, employees want to give back. They want to work at a company that’s truly connected with their communities. They want to know that what they do — at work and at home — has meaning. They want their company to support their efforts and to make a difference.

I first learned this lesson years ago
 80 when Kraft Canada helped build a
 much-needed distribution center for
 the major national food pantry in To-
 ronto. We leveraged our expertise in
 site location, distribution, logistics,
 85 and food safety, as well as providing
 volunteer manpower to pack the food
 once the facility was built. Attending
 the ribbon-cutting ceremony, along
 with dozens of my colleagues and lo-
 90 cal dignitaries, was a pivotal moment
 for me, personally and professionally.
 I felt a terrific sense of reward as an
 individual. But I also learned how
 meaningful it is for a company to
 95 support causes it can have an impact
 on, especially those that fulfill a basic
 human need such as hunger.

At Kraft Foods, we've been in-
 volved in fighting hunger and promot-
 100 ing healthy lifestyles for decades. We
 encourage our employees to support
 these causes, and we give them re-
 sources to get involved in the key is-
 sues facing their local communities.
 105 But today we need to do even more.

Despite the pressures of the reces-
 sion, earlier this year we decided to
 double our U.S. volunteer efforts.
 Taking the spirit of the Serve America
 110 Act beyond our borders, we answered
 the Obamas' call to action. The week
 of Oct. 5, more than 10,000 Kraft

Foods employees in 32 countries will
 roll up their sleeves to make a deli-
 cious difference. Activities like pack-
 ing food at pantries, teaching families
 about balanced nutrition, engaging
 kids in sports, and other acts of kind-
 ness will touch at least 500,000 lives.

We're humbled to reach out to so
 many people with our first-ever Make
 a Delicious Difference Week. But the
 truth is that we're just scratching the
 surface. In today's challenging econ-
 125 omy, more needs to be done to lessen
 the impact of the global financial cri-
 sis on families around the world.
 Those of us with plenty need to help
 those with less.

Corporate America needs to do its
 part to ensure that volunteerism re-
 mains a strong thread in the fabric of
 our nation. Together, by using our
 reach, our resources, and our exper-
 135 tise, we can significantly increase the
 level of civic involvement at home
 and abroad. The recession should be
 our call to action, not an excuse for
 inaction. I hope many will answer it.

[Irene Rosenfeld in *NEWSWEEK*, Sep
 21, 2009; 788 words; reprinted by per-
 mission; all rights reserved.

The author is the chairman and CEO
 of *Kraft Foods*.]

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Annotations:

12	to fray	wear out, become worn away, <i>here used figuratively</i>
24	to stall	become stuck; plunge
27	to pitch in	help, cooperate, usually in a very willing way
30	to unravel	begin to fail, come to an end
53	impact	effect
53	bottom line	most important factor that must be accepted, however reluctantly
54	where-withal	necessary means
55	to reignite	relight a fire, <i>here used figuratively</i>
62	to foster	encourage the development of
69	to restore	give back
82	pantry	place for storing food
83	to leverage	borrow money hoping to make more
83	expertise	expert knowledge
86	manpower	power in terms of the number of people available or needed to do something
90	dignitary	person of high rank
90	pivotal	crucial, very important
92	reward	<i>here</i> : benefit received
117	nutrition	foods, or the minerals, vitamins and other nourishing substances they contain
120	to be humbled	made to feel less important
132	fabric	substance

* * *

Worksheet “Hard Times are No Excuse”**I. Language and Vocabulary****1. Underline the correct alternative of the words in italics:**

According to Rosenfeld, it is very important Americans keep their tradition of *volunteering/voluntary/being willing*. But, not surprisingly, they have recently *cut costs to/cut back on/cut short* their efforts in this sector of life. This is obviously due to the present *economical/ecological/economic* downturn. Some numbers she mentions *request/suggest/say* that this old tradition is declining. Therefore, America must react. Rosenfeld is convinced it has an ability *for stepping up/of stepping up/to step up*. She herself has *signed/taken an oath on/subscribed to* the idea of “servant leadership” in order to show her *employers/employed ones/employees* that she is willing to give and not only to take. Rosenfeld would like to take this spirit *off/behind/beyond* the walls of her company. She compares the companies’ duty to other *social/societal/ sociological* initiatives. Leading the way, she hopes she can also create a more *engaged/indicted/committed* workforce. She tells her readers about her experience in Toronto, where she learnt a very important lesson. Kraft Foods supported the construction of a distribution centre. As soon as the *factory/ facility/faculty* was built, people were needed to volunteer in order to pack the food. Back then, after everything was done, she had a *terrific/horrific/terrible* sense of reward.

Kraft Foods have been dedicated to *proposing/discouraging/promoting* healthy lifestyles for a long time now. But today’s challenging *ecology/economy/economics* call(s) for even greater efforts. Only in this way can the strong thread in the *clothes/fabric/factory* of the American nation be kept alive.

2. Fill in the following words: *afford – civic – economically – network – passed – placed – provide – significance – summit – volunteerism.*

The following interview took place September 1, 2009

TIME: So this is for our third annual national service issue. And that is a great thing. I remember last year we did one that was the setup for the national service _____ that we did with you and Senator McCain. So it's a year later.

The President: Which was very cool. That was a great forum.

Yes, it was terrific — and it was in your old stomping grounds.

So a lot has changed since then. The Kennedy Serve America Act has been _____, which is fantastic. And we've done this enormous national poll about national service, and one of the things that we discovered, and other polls have shown this, too, is that, in fact, volunteering is down as a result of the recession, and _____ participation is down. And when we did that last year it was a kind of great moment for us, and since then, the economy has gone down. I'm wondering what you make of that and what you think the _____ of that is for national service.

The President: Well, I think that people are understandably anxious right now and feeling insecure _____. They are worried about home payments; they're worried about bills; they're worried about losing their health care; they're worried about their pension plans and whether or not they're going to be able to _____ to send their kids to college. And so I think that there's an understandable sense that I really have to take care of home base right now and make sure that I'm doing everything I can to _____ security for my family.

Now, I would argue that now is exactly the time where we need more _____, not only because needs are greater, more people are hungry, more people are out of work, more people are falling through the cracks, but when I talk to young people, for example, I say to them now is the time to get experience — since you may not be able to find a job right away — get some experience doing some good for your country, and that will not only be in the interest of the people you help, but it's going to be in your self-interest. You'll get work experience, you'll make contacts, you'll _____, you'll expand your community in a way that ultimately will be good for you.

And I think that you're going to start seeing a lot of young people finding that that makes sense. We were talking the other day to some young lawyers who were still at law school, and they're not in a position now where it's easy for them to necessarily to get _____ in these law firms, making \$150,000 a year, so you're starting to see more of them now interested potentially in working in public service, working in government, Teach for America — those kinds of options suddenly look a lot more attractive. So I think that the trend will change in the years to come.

II. Reading

Tick (✓) the correct answer(s).

1. The Obamas have asked Americans to get involved

- a. by way of law.
- b. by serving in the army.
- c. by personally addressing them.
- d. by finding new ways to help.

2. Volunteerism

- a. has been part and parcel of America since its beginning.
- b. has made an extraordinary historical development in America.
- c. has induced the White House to call for action.
- d. has recently lost some of its power in America.

3. Which of the following number(s) is/are correct?

- a. More than 60 percent put their own interests before those of others in times of crisis.
- b. More than 50 percent still support charities by giving food or money.
- c. Almost three quarters do not get involved as much as they used to.
- d. More than 70 percent have reduced their civic duties.

4. According to the author,

- a. companies have a special responsibility because of their well-trained leaders.
- b. good leadership implies forgetting about hierarchies.
- c. good followers should be served by their leaders.
- d. good leaders should expand the idea of serving others outside their companies.

5. Volunteering

- a. helps society, because then it doesn't have to pay for special services.
- b. helps companies because work is done for free.
- c. helps companies through personally enriched individuals.
- d. helps the individual by strengthening their personality.

6. The Toronto experience

- a. was a very important lesson for the author on two different levels.
- b. encouraged the author to do the same in other countries.
- c. mainly consisted in the ribbon-cutting ceremony.
- d. helped the author forget the hunger in the world.

7. What did Kraft Foods do in October?

- a. They touched more than 500,000 people.
- b. They gave information about how to eat in a healthy way.
- c. They offered physical activities to children.
- d. Their employees got involved in voluntary work in more than 30 countries.

III. Text comprehension

1. Summarize what has to be done according to the author in order to promote volunteerism in the United States.
2. Outline what the author's company has done so far to follow the Obamas' call.

IV. Text analysis

1. Name some of the recurrent themes of the text.
2. Analyze this type of text paying particular attention to its purpose.

V. Interpretation of cartoons

Describe and interpret the following cartoon in about 150 words.

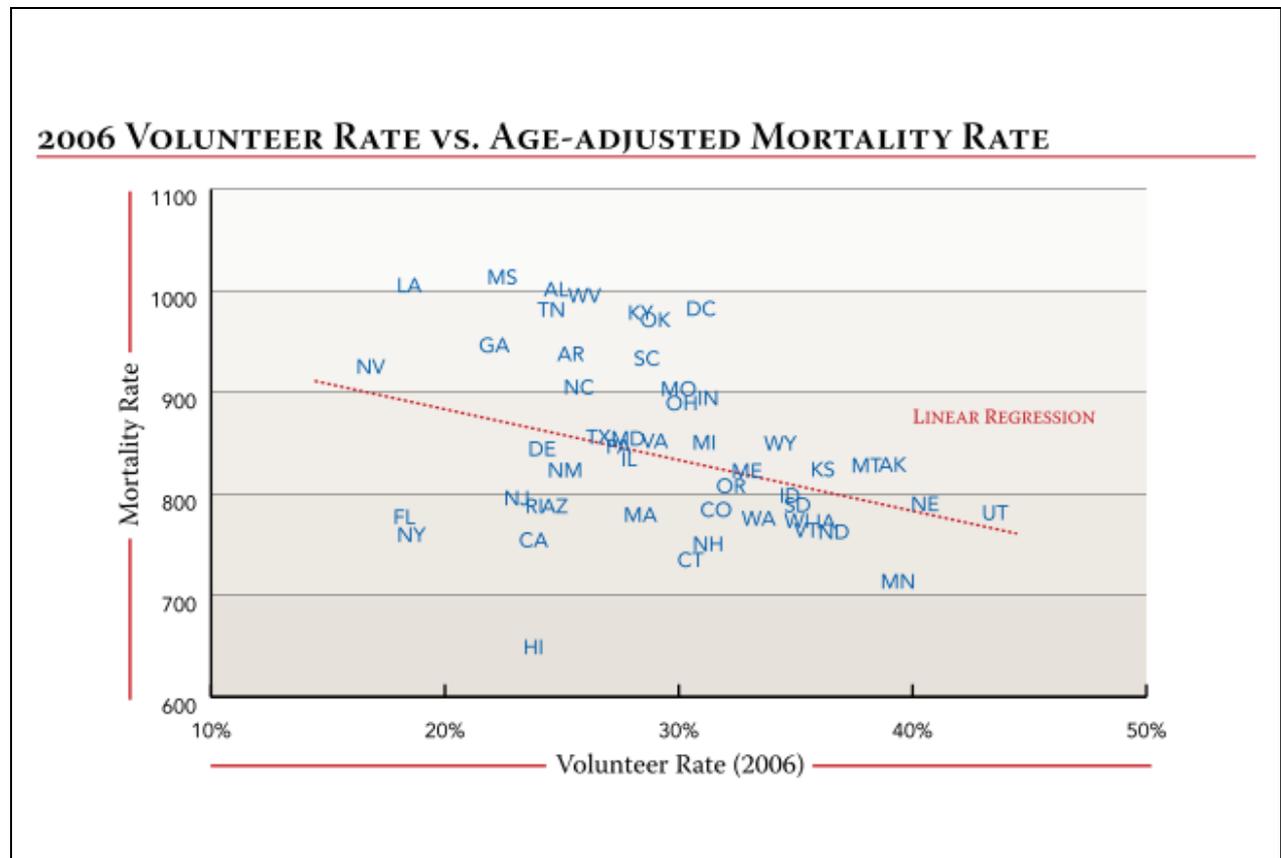


[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_Z6VvF1aVfQw/SfHfKUe7DXI/AAAAAAAAAGg/ywAfw1ivFIk/s400/volunteer-cartoon.jpg]

VI. Description of graphs

Describe the following graph in about 150 words.

Note: the letters stand for the single federal states of the USA.



[http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr.pdf]

VII. Composition

Do you think volunteering can be encouraged by way of laws?
Write about 250 – 300 words.

VIII. Translation

Translate the following text into idiomatic German.

Voluntary service, according to virtually every President since the early 20th century, has been a vital factor in America's success. It provided the groundwork from which 13 disparate colonies could grow into a mighty nation. It survived centuries of wars, depressions, and partisan politics. But today it is dead.

So implies the Serve America Act. Serve America is the Senate's attempt to turn into reality President Obama's campaign promises about public service. Since the campaign, Obama has described these promises as the start of a new era of selflessness and civic responsibility. But in practice, the bill (and its House¹ companion, the Generations Invigorating Volunteering and Education Act, or GIVE) hearkens back to an old era and to the old ideas of someone Congress should hesitate to mimic in a recession: Herbert Hoover.

During the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama suggested the government create a few new programs for public service in new areas such as public diplomacy and "green jobs," use the Internet to make the federal government a central figure in connecting people with service opportunities, and increase government involvement in the non-profit sector. He also wanted to expand and create federally funded financial incentives for students to spend time volunteering. But mostly he wanted to expand existing programs so as to employ more workers – AmeriCorps to 250,000, the Peace Corps to 16,000 and YouthBuild to 50,000.

¹ House: House of Representatives

[<http://www.heritage.org/research/thought/wm2351.cfm>]

IX. Mediation

An American friend of yours who has told you about the recent discussions as to civic commitment in the USA would like you to tell him what the situation is like in Germany in this respect. You've come across the following article and sum it up for him in an e-mail.
Write some 200-250 words.

In den Vereinigten Staaten hat bürgerschaftliches Engagement eine lange Tradition. In Deutschland haben die Menschen erst angefangen, sich weniger auf den Staat zu verlassen.

Wenn von gesellschaftlichen Innovationen gesprochen wird, finden wir Deutschen uns im internationalen Vergleich oft am Ende der Skala wieder. Insbesondere Staat und Politik bewegen sich eher in traditionellen Bahnen.

Betrachten wir allerdings das ehrenamtliche Engagement, können wir durchaus punkten. Alle Untersuchungen zeigen, dass sich überdurchschnittlich viele Bürgerinnen und Bürger bürgerschaftlich engagieren. Der Ausdruck bürgerschaftliches oder Bürger-Engagement verdrängt übrigens den Begriff Ehrenamt, weil sich viele Engagierte mit den Begriffen „Ehre“ und „Auseinandersetzung mit dem Thema“ nicht mehr identifizieren können.

Insgesamt sind heute 23 Millionen Menschen in Deutschland aus eigenem Antrieb bürgerschaftlich engagiert. Sie spenden der Allgemeinheit ihre Zeit, Ideen, Empathie, Kreativität, Reputation und Vermögenswerte - im Kirchenchor, der Menschenrechtsgruppe, dem Sportverein, der Umweltinitiative oder der Nachbarschaftshilfe. Etwa 80 Prozent des Engagements findet in der Zivilgesellschaft statt, durch Dienstleistungen ebenso wie durch das Eintreten für Positionen und Themen.

Dieses Engagement hat zuletzt zugenommen. Es verlagert sich aber von den großen alten Verbänden zu den kleinen, jungen, selbstorganisierten Gruppen, in denen relativ hierarchiefrei mitgestaltet werden kann. Auch engagieren sich Menschen heute eher für ein Projekt als für eine Organisation und wechseln diese daher öfter.

Dies wird beklagt, und es ist gewiss eine Herausforderung für Führungskräfte in den Organisationen. Das darf aber keinesfalls zu der Schlussfolgerung verführen, die Menschen würden sich für das allgemeine Wohl weniger interessieren als früher. Das Gegenteil ist richtig: Deutschland wird immer mehr zu einem Land, dessen Bürgerinnen und Bürger sich selbstermächtigt und selbstorganisiert für ihr Umfeld engagieren; nur eben nicht mehr in den traditionellen Bahnen.

Dies ist in den USA schon lange so. Die ersten weißen Siedler kamen, weil sie das Übermaß an Reglementierung in Glaubens- und Lebensfragen in Europa nicht mehr ertrugen, Sie wollten ihre Angelegenheiten selbst in die Hand nehmen und frei darin sein, ihr Leben nach eigenen Vorstellungen zu gestalten. Auch nach fast 400 Jahren ist dieser Geist lebendig. Seit den 60er Jahren gehören „Volunteer Services“ (Freiwilligendienste) ebenso wie „Advocacy“ (Interessenvertretung) wieder verstärkt zum American Way of Life. Patriotische Gesten dürfen nicht darüber hinwegtäuschen, dass die Amerikaner lange nicht so viele Lebensbereiche ihrem Staat überantwortet haben. Wichtige Teile des Sozial- und Bildungswesens ebenso wie die Pflege der Kultur werden selbst organisiert.

<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/leben/706/468272/text/>

X. Listening Comprehension

Listen carefully, then answer the following questions.

1. Name the factors that, according to the speaker, indicate that the USA is in a period of crisis.
2. What is GIVE an abbreviation of?
3. Who does the GIVE Act address?
4. Who does the Summer of Service initiative turn to? What is special about this group?
5. How many hours of service may earn this group educational awards of up to how much money?
6. How do young people benefit, apart from earning educational awards?

XI. Research

Find out about the *Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act* (H.R. 1388) mentioned in the first paragraph.

Lösungsvorschlag “Hard Times are No Excuse”

I. 1. According to Rosenfeld, it is very important Americans keep their tradition of **volunteering**/voluntary/being willing. But, not surprisingly, they have recently *cut costs to/cut back on/cut short* their efforts in this sector of life. This is obviously due to the present *economical/ecological/economic* downturn. Some numbers she mentions *request/ suggest/say* that this old tradition is declining. Therefore, America must react. Rosenfeld is convinced it has an ability *for stepping up/of stepping up/to step up*. She herself has *signed/taken an oath on/subscribed to* the idea of “servant leadership” in order to show her *employers/employed ones/employees* that she is willing to give and not only to take. Rosenfeld would like to take this spirit *off/behind/beyond* the walls of her company. She compares the companies’ duty to other **social/societal/sociological** initiatives. Leading the way, she hopes she can also create a more *engaged/indicted/ committed* workforce. She tells her readers about her experience in Toronto, where she learnt a very important lesson. Kraft Foods supported the construction of a distribution centre. As soon as the *factory/facility/faculty* was built, people were needed to volunteer in order to pack the food. Back then, after everything was done, she had a **terrific/horrific/terrible** sense of reward.

Kraft Foods have been dedicated to *proposing/discouraging/promoting* healthy lifestyles for a long time now. But today’s challenging *ecology/economy/economics* calls for even greater efforts. Only in this way can the strong thread in the *clothes/fabric/factory* of the American nation be kept alive.

2. TIME: So this is for our third annual national service issue. And that is a great thing. I remember last year we did one that was the setup for the national service **summit** that we did with you and Senator McCain. So it's a year later.

The President: Which was very cool. That was a great forum.

Yes, it was terrific — and it was in your old stomping grounds.

So a lot has changed since then. The Kennedy Serve America Act has been **passed**, which is fantastic. And we've done this enormous national poll about national service, and one of the things that we discovered, and other polls have shown this, too, is that, in fact, volunteering is down as a result of the recession, and **civic** participation is down. And when we did that last year it was a kind of great moment for us, and since then, the economy has gone down. I'm wondering what you make of that and what you think the **significance** of that is for national service.

The President: Well, I think that people are understandably anxious right now and feeling insecure **economically**. They are worried about home payments; they're worried about bills; they're worried about losing their health care; they're worried about their pension plans and whether or not they're going to be able to **afford** to send their kids to college. And so I think that there's an understandable sense that I really have to take care of home base right now and make sure that I'm doing everything I can to **provide** security for my family.

Now, I would argue that now is exactly the time where we need more **volunteerism**, not only because needs are greater, more people are hungry, more people are out of work, more people are falling through the cracks, but when I talk to young people, for example, I say to them now is the time to get experience — since you may not be able to find a job right away — get some experience doing some good for your country, and that will not only be in the interest of the people you help, but it's going to be in your self-interest. You'll get work experience, you'll make contacts, you'll **network**, you'll expand your community in a way that ultimately will be good for you.

And I think that you're going to start seeing a lot of young people finding that that makes sense. We were talking the other day to some young lawyers who were still at law school, and they're not in a position now where it's easy for them to necessarily to get **placed** in these law firms, making \$150,000 a year, so you're starting to see more of them now interested potentially in working in public service, working in government, Teach for America — those kinds of options suddenly look a lot more attractive. So I think that the trend will change in the years to come.

<http://www.ncoc.net/index.php?tray=content&tid=top40&cid=2gp157>, adapted

- II. 1. The Obamas have asked Americans to get involved**
 - a. by way of law.
 - c. by personally addressing them.
- 2. Volunteerism**
 - a. has been part and parcel of America since its beginning.
 - d. has recently lost some of its power in America.
- 3. Which of the following number(s) is/are correct?**
 - a. More than 60 percent put their own interests before those of others in times of crisis.
 - c. Almost three quarters do not get involved as much as they used to.
- 4. According to the author,**
 - b. good leadership implies forgetting about hierarchies.
 - d. good leaders should expand the idea of serving others outside their companies.
- 5. Volunteering**
 - c. helps companies through personally enriched individuals.
 - d. helps the individual by strengthening their personality.
- 6. The Toronto experience**
 - a. was a very important lesson for the author on two different levels.
- 7. What did Kraft Foods do in October?**
 - b. They gave information about how to eat in a healthy way.
 - c. They offered physical activities to children.
 - d. Their employees got involved in voluntary work in more than 30 countries.
- III. 1.** According to the author, various steps have to be taken to keep the spirit of volunteerism alive in America. In times of economic crises, people are less inclined to spend their time and money on voluntary work or on charities. Therefore, companies should lead the way. By practicing the ideal of “servant leadership”, which means that the leaders do not expect their followers to serve them, but are, on the contrary, willing to serve them, employers show their employees that they are prepared to volunteer and thus incite them to do voluntary work as well. However, this involvement should not be restricted to the company itself, but be taken outside, so that the whole communities profit. The author is convinced that companies have a particular responsibility, because they dispose of various kinds of resources that enable them to influence society in a positive way. Rosenfeld assumes that employees are willing to give, but they have to be shown how they can do that effectively and they expect their employers to help them in their endeavours. Citing her own company as an example, the author thinks that voluntary efforts should also be taken abroad. In general, people in wealthy countries have to develop some awareness of their privileged position and the need that they have to support those who are worse off.

2. As Rosenfeld is convinced that companies have to lead the way when it comes to voluntary work, she tells her readers what her company has done so far in order to promote volunteerism in the United States. First of all, she has adopted the ideal of “servant leadership”, thus giving up part of hierarchies and privileges and showing her willingness to serve her employees. She learnt this lesson from an experience she had years ago when her company supported the construction of a distribution centre in Canada, because it showed her what an effect her company’s contribution had on something very essential and fundamental, human hunger. Her company has fought to prevent starvation and to promote balanced nutrition for decades. It provides its employees with the necessary resources, so that they can get involved as well, not only in context of projects of their company, but also beyond, in their own communities. This year, Kraft Food has taken up the Obamas’ call to action by doubling its voluntary work in the United States. But also abroad, in more than 30 countries, the company has had more than 10,000 of its employees volunteer in various fields connected with food and a healthy lifestyle. With their first Make a Delicious Difference Week, they hope to get in touch with and affect as many people as possible.

IV. 1. Obviously, the recurrent themes in the text are closely linked with its overall message, i.e. to encourage Americans from all walks of life to take action. Thus, she supports the government’s “call to action”, which is a phrase coming up several times in her article (ll. 11/12; l. 111; l. 138). Moreover, the custom of Make A Difference Day, a USA national day of helping others, is alluded to when the author mentions this phrase, “make a difference”, over and over again (l. 50; l. 78; ll. 114/115; ll. 121/122). Along the same line, the expressions “get involved” can be found in ll. 8 and 103, just as “civic involvement” in l. 136.

The second important point Rosenfeld wants to make is that the desired involvement can best be put into practice if we work together. This cooperation turns up again and again in the text, although not always phrased in the same way: “*corporate America*” (ll. 30/31; l. 130), the idea of “servant leadership” (l. 36); “volunteering benefits *the individual, the Company, and society*” (ll. 58/59); “truly connected with their communities” (ll. 73/74); “more than 10,000 Kraft Foods employees in 32 countries will roll up their sleeves ...” (ll. 112-114); “Those of us with plenty need to help those with less” (ll. 128/129).

2. The article appeared in a weekly news magazine. However, it was not written by a journalist, but by Irene Rosenfeld, chairman and CEO of Kraft Foods. It offers the author’s view on a current topic, volunteerism. As in addition, use of the first person pronoun “I” is used, it can be described as a column, here in the business section of the magazine.

The form of discourse commonly used in this article is persuasion. The author clearly aims to influence people’s actions and opinions by stressing the positive points about getting involved. She appeals to her readers’ emotions when encouraging them again and again to take action and to join all the others who already get involved in various types of voluntary work. Sentences such as “America has an obligation and a unique ability to step up. The time is now.” or “But today we need to do even more” remind us of speeches made by politicians and challenge the readers’ willingness to participate.

- V.** In the cartoon by Brant Parker and Johnny Hart, a woman and a man have a conversation. The lady talks about her efforts to organize a national holiday in order to honour volunteerism, which have, however, been in vain. When the man wants to know why this is so, she tells him that she could not find anybody who wanted to serve on the committee – and this is also the punch line of the cartoon: the lady wants to promote civic commitment and voluntary work, but apparently, there are not so many people who hold these values in a similarly high esteem. Nobody can be found to commit himself to do voluntary work on the committee which is to organize the holiday in honour of volunteerism. Thus, it is clearly shown that the lady's aspirations fail due to an obvious lack of the quality she is eager to promote: voluntary commitment on behalf of one's fellow human beings. [158 w]
- VI.** The graph examines the volunteer rate and the age-adjusted mortality rate in the various federal states of the USA. Although this is not true for every single state, it seems that states with a high volunteer rate have lower rates of mortality. Although there are exceptions such as Hawaii, which has the lowest mortality rate of all the states, about 650, and at the same time a rather low volunteer rate, just below 25%, the above-mentioned tendency can clearly be seen. Louisiana, for example, has one of the highest mortality rates, around 1,000, and at the same time one of the lowest volunteer rates, somewhat below 20%. Minnesota, on the contrary, boasts a very low mortality rate, about 700, and on the other hand a relatively high volunteer rate of about 40%. Thus, there seems to be a strong correlation between civic commitment and good health. To make this correlation more evident, a line of dots is drawn in the graph to point out the linear regression of the mortality rate which goes with an increasing percentage in the volunteer rate.
- VII.** In the United States, a country known for a population that holds volunteerism in high esteem, an act has been passed to encourage its citizens to get involved even more. To many, that seems to be a contradiction in itself, something like mandatory volunteerism. In this context, the question arises if volunteering can be encouraged by way of laws at all. The willingness of its citizens to get involved in voluntary work is a necessity for any state. Although the economic value of volunteerism can hardly be quantified, it goes without saying that it equals a considerable share of the GDP. As a consequence, it is the right of a state to try and encourage its citizens to commit themselves even more. At the same time, there seems to be a tendency among young people to get involved less than their parents' generation. Some people argue that they are offered too many ways of having fun, particularly through modern electronic devices, so that they are no longer aware of the importance of social commitment. If these young people are encouraged by law to do voluntary work, it may give them a chance to see how rewarding this type of commitment can be. On the other hand, it is very doubtful if legislation should be employed to raise volunteerism. Voluntary work presupposes that you want to do it on your own. Therefore, it should not be enforced by the state or any other institutions. Making people do something by law often leads to inner resistance. It seems to be in human nature to oppose to anything that is inflicted from the outside, regardless of whether the service imposed is in itself positive or negative. In summary, laws are probably not the right way to boost people's willingness to do voluntary work. As a compromise, people could be offered the choice to commit themselves instead of paying part of their taxes – in this way, the state and its citizens' need might be reconciled. [331 w]

- VIII.** Der Freiwilligendienst ist, nach den Worten von praktisch jedem [amerikanischen] Präsidenten seit Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts, [schon immer] ein ganz entscheidender Beitrag zum Erfolg Amerikas.
 Er lieferte das Fundament, auf dem 13 ganz unterschiedliche Kolonien zu einer mächtigen Nation zusammenwachsen konnten.
 Er überlebte Jahrhunderte voller Kriege, Wirtschaftskrisen und von Parteipolitik.
 Aber heute ist er tot.
 Das legt [jedenfalls] das *Serve America* Gesetz nahe.
Serve America ist der Versuch des Senats, die Wahlversprechen von Präsident Obama zum Dienst an der Allgemeinheit wahr zu machen.
 Seit dem Wahlkampf hat Obama diese Versprechen als den Beginn eines neuen Zeitalters der Selbstlosigkeit und staatsbürgerlicher Verantwortung beschrieben.
 Aber in der Praxis geht der Gesetzesentwurf (ebenso wie sein Gegenstück aus dem Repräsentantenhaus, der *Generations Invigorating Volunteering and Education Act*, (Gesetz der Generationen zur Stärkung von ehrenamtlicher Arbeit und Erziehung) kurz *GIVE*) auf eine alte Epoche und auf die alten Ideen von jemandem zurück, den der Kongress in Zeiten einer schwachen Konjunktur nachzuzahlen sich gut überlegen sollte: Herbert Hoover.
 Während des Wahlkampfes von 2008 schlug Barack Obama vor, dass die Regierung einige neue Programme für den Dienst an der Allgemeinheit in neuen Bereichen schaffen sollte, wie zum Beispiel der öffentlichen Diplomatie oder bei „grünen Jobs“, dass sie das Internet nutzen sollte, um der Bundesregierung eine zentrale Rolle dabei zukommen zu lassen, den Menschen Möglichkeiten des Dienstes zu vermitteln, und dass die Regierung ihr Engagement im gemeinnützigen Sektor erhöhen sollte.
 Des weiteren wollte er vom Bund geförderte finanzielle Anreize für Studenten erweitern und schaffen, sich ehrenamtlich zu betätigen.
 Aber am meisten wollte er [bereits] bestehende Programme aufstocken, um mehr Arbeiter anzustellen – AmeriCorps auf 250.000, das Friedenskorps auf 16.000 und YouthBuild auf 50.000.

IX. Dear John,

I've come across an article in a leading German newspaper that talks exactly about this topic. According to it, civic commitment has a long tradition in the USA, but not in Germany. Generally, Germany is often associated with tradition rather than innovation. When it comes to volunteerism, however, studies show that the participation of the German population is above average. All in all, about 23 million people in Germany spend some time and energy on voluntary work of various kinds. About 80% of it takes place in civil society.

Recently, this type of commitment has increased. Two trends can be made out: groups are getting smaller and younger, without any hierarchy, and people tend to commit themselves in projects rather than in organisations, which complain about it. However, we must not draw the conclusion that people are less interested in the general wellbeing; the opposite is the case.

In the USA, the spirit of the early settlers who opposed to too much control on life and faith and therefore left Europe is still alive today. Since the 60s, volunteer services and advocacy have become more typical of the American Way of Life. In spite of their patriotism, Americans handle important sectors such as social welfare and education themselves rather than handing them over to the state.

Best wishes ...

- X. [Audio source : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5figlQmNgc>]
1. soaring unemployment, rising health care costs, financial system turned upside town
 2. Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education (Act)
 3. It addresses Americans of all ages, from middle schoolers to baby boomers.
 4. This initiative turns to middle school students. They are in a special situation, as they will soon make the transition from middle school to high school.
 5. 100 hours of service can earn them educational awards of up to \$ 500.
 6. Teens from disadvantaged communities hold more positive civic attitudes. Generally, young volunteers are more likely to be successful at school and avoid risky behaviours such as alcohol, drugs or crime.

Full transcript:

For generations, during times of great crisis, Americans have stepped up and served their country and their communities. Today, with soaring unemployment, rising health care costs, and a financial system turned upside down, we face one of those moments.

When the National Community Service Act was enacted in 1990, we saw powerful new opportunities to inspire civic engagement to transform our communities. And today, the Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education Act, yes, the GIVE Act, renews and enhances these opportunities by providing Americans of all ages, from middle schoolers to baby boomers, the chance to reach their full potential as engaged and active members of their community.

The Summer of Service initiative is geared toward middle school students and provides a new opening to reach many young people who we know will benefit from the opportunity to spend a summer in service in their communities, a right [sic] of passage, as students make the transition from middle to high school. Through a competitive grant program, States and localities can offer students an opportunity to participate in a structured community service program, earning educational awards of up to \$500 upon completing 100 hours of service.

Research shows that, among those students who participate in in-service learning, teens from disadvantaged communities who serve hold more positive civic attitudes. Students who engage in volunteering are more likely to be successful at school and avoid risky behaviors, such as drugs, alcohol, and crime.

This legislation also provides a long-awaited increase to the Segal America Corps Education Award, tying it to Pell grants to ensure that it stays in step with rising tuition rates. It will make it easier for older Americans to give back as well, to share their experience and expertise through Encore Fellowships and Silver Scholarships.

This is a transformational moment in our Nation's history. And so today, with these efforts we hope to mark a new beginning, ready to meet that responsibility again to the greater good and to our shared community. And I urge my colleagues to vote "yes."

[<http://www.congressonrecord.com/page/H3548>]

XI.

Creates 175,000 New Service Opportunities and Rewards Americans for Commitment

- Grows the number of volunteers nationwide to 250,000, up from 75,000. These new service opportunities will include the expansion of existing service programs, like AmeriCorps, as well as four new service corps focused on **education, health care, energy** and **veterans**. All service programs established under the bill will be overseen by the Corporation for National and Community Service.
- Increases the full-time education award service members receive in exchange for their work to \$5,350 for 2010. This award would also be linked to match future increases in the Pell Grant scholarship in order to keep up with rising college costs.

Creates New Service Corps to Meet Key Needs in Low-Income Communities

- Establishes four new service corps to address key needs in low income communities, including a Clean Energy Corps to encourage energy efficiency and conservation, an Education Corps to help increase student engagement, achievement and graduation, a Healthy Futures Corps to improve health care access, and a Veterans Service Corps to enhance services for veterans.

Provides Incentives for Middle and High School Students to Engage in Service

- Establishes the Summer of Service program that engages middle and high school students in volunteer activities in their communities and allows them to earn a \$500 education award to be used for college costs. Students will be eligible to participate in two terms of service and earn up to a total of \$1,000.

Makes High School Students Part of Solution to Challenges in their Communities

- Establishes Youth Engagement Zones, a new service-learning program to engage low-income high school students and out-of-school youth in volunteer efforts that address challenges in their local communities. The program will encourage partnerships between community-based organizations and schools in high-need communities and apply real world activities to teach students about a certain topic. For example, volunteering in a homeless shelter could supplement a class about poverty.

Boosts Opportunities for Disadvantaged and Foster Youth and Native Americans

- Expands opportunities for disadvantaged youth, including **doubling the resources available to engage youth with disabilities**, to become more involved with service and offers people of all ages and those from diverse backgrounds introduction to service.
- **Encourages adults to serve as mentors for foster youth.**
- **Establishes a new office for service opportunities for Native Americans.**

Strengthens Disaster Relief Service Efforts

- Expands the focus of the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) to include disaster relief, infrastructure improvement, environmental and energy conservation, and urban and rural development.
- Encourages service partnerships with other federal agencies and increases the participation of disadvantaged youth to 50 percent of program participants by 2011.

Establishes an Alumni Reserve to Respond in Emergencies

- Establishes an alumni corps of former participants who can be called to service during times of disaster and other emergencies.

Bolsters America's Competitiveness

- Encourages scientists, technicians and mathematicians to participate in service programs to help keep our nation competitive.

Expands Service Opportunities for Older Americans and Public-Private Partnerships

- Creates two new fellowships to engage social entrepreneurs, boomers and retirees, the private sector and Americans from all generations into service. **Older Americans will be al-**

lowed to transfer their awards to a child, foster child or grandchild to help them pay for college.

1. **ServeAmerica Fellowships:** ServeAmerica Fellows are individuals who propose their own plans for serving in their communities to address national needs and are matched up with a service sponsor.
2. **Silver Scholarships and Encore Fellowships:** These programs offer Americans, age 55 or older, post-career service opportunities as well as entrance into new careers in the public or nonprofit sector. **Silver Scholars will be able to earn up to \$1,000 in exchange for 350 hours of service.**

Creates a nationwide community-based infrastructure to leverage investments in service

- Builds a nationwide service infrastructure through community-building investments, social entrepreneurship, and programs to support and generate new volunteers.
 1. **Community Solutions Fund:** Creates a Community Solutions Fund pilot program that awards competitive matching grants to social entrepreneur venture funds in order to provide community organizations with the resources to replicate or expand proven solutions to community challenges, **including a new focus on leveraging public private partnerships in small communities and rural areas.** (Examples of service organizations that were launched by social entrepreneurs include Teach for America, City Year, Citizen Schools, Jump Start, Working Today, an organization that provides affordable, portable health benefits to 100,000 Americans, and the SEED school, the nation's first public urban boarding school.)
 2. **Volunteer Generation Fund:** Provides grants to improve the quality and capacity of organizations to work with volunteers, and to create innovations in volunteerism in the areas of recruitment, training and management.

Encourages Highly Skilled Professionals to Help Improve Global Health

- **Expands the Volunteers for Prosperity program which encourages highly skilled professionals to serve internationally in targeted areas of need such as global health.**

Establishes Call to Service Campaigns

- Includes a Call to Service Campaign to launch a national campaign encouraging all Americans to engage in service and to observe September 11th as a National Day of Service and Remembrance

Recognizes and Supports Colleges and Universities Engaged in Service

- Establishes the Campuses of Service to support and recognize institutions of higher education with exemplary service-learning programs and assists students in the pursuit of public service careers.

<http://edlabor.house.gov/blog/2009/03/the-edward-m-kennedy-serve-ame.shtml>

Criticism of the act has mainly been directed at the fact that in the long run, young people might be put into mandatory service. Concerns have been raised that those young people might be sent to a type of re-education camp before where they would be trained in a philosophy put forward by the government.