

# Section by Section: Building Civic Bridges Act (BCBA)

Introduced by Senators Chris Coons (D-Del.) and Todd Young (R-Ind.)

## Section 1. Short Title

The bill is titled as the “Building Civic Bridges Act.”

## Section 2. Civic Bridgebuilding

### *Overview*

- Amends the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to establish an Office of Civic Bridgebuilding.
- The CEO of AmeriCorps may designate an Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding to administer the Office of Civic Bridgebuilding to carry out the following:
  - Administer the grant program to support civic bridgebuilding efforts across the Nation and establish standardized criteria to track the effectiveness of funded projects and activities;
  - Support AmeriCorps in providing training in civic bridgebuilding skills and techniques to AmeriCorps participants and host sites;
  - Support research and evaluations on civic bridgebuilding, including through collaborative efforts with existing AmeriCorps resources and related agencies, as well as the creation of a public research basis focused on civic bridgebuilding; and
  - Activate a public conversation about the importance of civic bridgebuilding by convening and coordinating civic bridgebuilding programs, providing resources, networking, and collaboration opportunities to the field.
- The Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding should consult members of the civic bridgebuilding field to develop strategic priorities for the office, develop criteria and best practices, and support the development and dissemination of related research.
  - Members of this consultation process should represent diverse ideological, religious, racial, regional, professional, or ethnic communities. This can include, but is not limited to, representatives of civic bridgebuilding entities, State Service Commissions, researchers, and those involved in related work at other federal agencies.

### *Civic Bridgebuilding Pilot Grant Program*

- A grant awarded under this subsection shall be for a 1-year period. Grants shall be awarded under this subsection in 3 grant cycles for each 3-year period of the pilot program.
- Eligible entities seeking an application to AmeriCorps for a grant should include:
  - A description of the project that will be funded with the grant; and
  - An assurance that the project will:
    - Engage communities across lines of polarization;
    - Facilitate civic bridgebuilding;
    - Cite research supporting the project’s efficacy and impact; and
    - Ensure the wellbeing of all participants involved.

### *Comptroller General*

- The GAO shall, on an annual basis, submit to Congress a report which summarizes and assesses the activities carried out by the Office of Civic Bridgebuilding.

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### *Definitions*

- **Civic bridgebuilding:** activities that foster respect between diverse communities, strengthen relationships across lines of difference, and forge a sense of common civic purpose, and which seeks to solve community problems and diminish polarization. This includes:
  - Activities that take place in local communities, where individuals and institutions come together to build empathy, strengthen belonging, and address local issues; and
  - Activities at the field level, where civic bridgebuilding leaders work together to share research and best practices, learn from one another, and grow civic bridgebuilding efforts.
- **Civic bridgebuilding field:** the programs, leaders, and community groups involved in civic bridgebuilding activities; researchers producing related work; and federal agencies and public institutions supporting work related to civic bridgebuilding both domestically and internationally.
- **Civic bridgebuilding leader:** an individual who leads civic bridgebuilding programs or efforts.
- **Civic bridgebuilding program:** a program, project, or activity which embodies or works to achieve the goals of civic bridgebuilding.
- **Civic engagement:** an individual or collective action designed to address a public concern or an unmet human, educational, health care, environmental, or public safety need.
- **Eligible entity:** a nonprofit entity, public institution, elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, religious group, or consortium of any such entities.
- **Public institution:** a library, unit of local government, or other entity expending public funds or performing public functions.
- **Research:** research which embodies principles of scientific research as defined in the National and Community Service Act of 1990.
- **Research base:** any publications that contain observations, analysis, and conclusions based on principles of scientific research with respect to the challenges of political and social polarization in the United States, and practical approaches to strengthen social cohesion, foster a sense of national connection, or improve intergroup relations in divided communities.

### *Authorization of Appropriations*

- The bill authorizes \$15,000,000 to carry out this section for each of fiscal years 2025 through 2027.

### **Section 3. Table of Contents**

Establishes a reference to this section in the table of contents of the National and Community Service Act of 1990.