

## State Leaders Are Wary of Federal Efforts to Link Student Aid to Volunteer Service

They say proposals raise practical and philosophical questions

By **GOLDIE BLUMENSTYK**

The idea of linking federal student aid to volunteer service is building steam in Congress, but the concept is sputtering in state capitols.

While many state officials say they welcome programs that would encourage community service, some governors, financial-aid administrators, and directors of state volunteer programs raise philosophical and practical questions about how—or whether—such a massive program should be put into place.

Some from the volunteer field note from direct experience that it would be no simple task to train the hundreds of thousands of new volunteers or to locate meaningful work opportunities for them.

Without substantial new investments for training, "it would be a disaster. There aren't the facilities," says John A. Briscoe, director of PennServe, an office creat-

ed under Gov. Robert P. Casey, a Democrat, to promote community service in Pennsylvania.

And state leaders concerned with higher education question whether the programs will detour young people from their path to college, particularly if the final plan to

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**The sociologist who first proposed linking student aid to national service has become something of a celebrity: Page A17.**

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emerge from the half-dozen proposals now being discussed on Capitol Hill makes college financial aid contingent on service.

"It hits unevenly. If you happen to be rich, you don't worry about it," says New Jersey Gov. Thomas H. Kean, a Republican who will become president of Drew

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## FAR FROM FORT LAUDERDALE, SPRING BREAK IS REDEFINED



**'Alternative' spring-break programs have sprung up on many campuses. The focus: community service. Jennifer Erdman and Russ Wharton are leading a team of Vanderbilt students painting the home of Irene Harrell (center). Story on Page A33.**

## State Leaders Wary of Federal Plans for Volunteer Service

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University when his term ends next January.

Likewise, Massachusetts Gov. Michael S. Dukakis, a Democrat, says: "I wouldn't condition getting a loan on the fact that you're doing national service."

Governor Dukakis says that many students who attend college in his state are working and supporting families. If they were also required to enroll in a lower-paying national-service corps, "these people won't be able to go to college."

He says he would prefer to see Congress create incentives similar to those he championed as the Democratic Presidential nominee last year, such as wiping out portions of student-loan debt for people who enter professions like teaching, where there are shortages.

### Student-Aid Officials Worried

Officials who work directly with student-aid programs also are worried.

New York State, for example, operates a generous student-aid program, but it also depends on the federal government for \$570-million in grants and loans to its students.

"For those to disappear and to be replaced by an unknown quantity, such as national service, is awfully dramatic and could cause more problems than assistance," says Charles G. Treadwell, a program-research specialist with the New York State Higher Education Services Corpora-



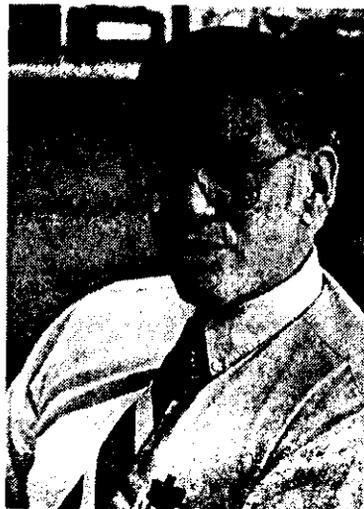
**Kathleen Kennedy Townsend:** The best proposals will offer incentives and reward people for helping to meet community needs.

tion, the state agency that operates student-aid programs.

"I'm not sure the right people will receive the incentive and the help to go to postsecondary education. Instead they may find barriers."

Mr. Treadwell, who is now analyzing the various federal plans, says that completely replacing the array of existing federal student-aid programs with mandatory national service could play particular havoc with New York's new Liberty Scholarship program. Those scholarships, which are to begin in the 1991-92 academic year, are designed to encourage the state's neediest junior-high-school students to prepare for college by assuring them that all their higher-education costs will be covered through a combination of state and federal grants.

The Liberty Scholarships were de-



**John A. Briscoe:** Without substantial investments to train new volunteers, the program "would be a disaster."

vised to "piggyback" on the federal Pell Grant program: After obtaining the federal aid they qualify for under the Pell Grant program for tuition, students could turn to the state for the rest of the money they need.

Several financial-aid officials in other states have expressed similar reservations, while stressing that they endorse the concept of involving more students in community-service activities.

Many of their states, they note, already are spending considerable sums to operate community-service programs like state conservation corps, which put young people to work refurbishing historic buildings and park benches.

For a national-service program, they suggest that a better model is one that rewards voluntary community service with financial aid.

In at least two states, Iowa and California, such programs are now under consideration. The Iowa Corps, which is being pushed by Gov. Terry E. Branstad, a Republican, would pay up to \$500 in tuition credits to students who volunteer a yet-to-be-specified number of hours. In California, the Speaker of the Assembly, Willie L. Brown, Jr., is proposing a \$2-million program that would award scholarships to high-school students with exemplary records in community service.

California's Human Corps law, enacted in 1988, also requires public colleges to find community-service opportunities for student volunteers. That law is a compromise from the initial proposal, which would have required students to perform 30 hours of volunteer work to graduate. That bill was opposed by students and university officials who said it was inappropriate to require volunteer service.

### **Offering Incentives**

Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, director of a Maryland program to promote volunteer activities in public schools, says the best proposals will be those that offer incentives and reward people for helping to meet community needs. She was one of the members of the Democratic Leadership Council promoting national service in a nationwide tour last fall, but she does not agree with that group's proposal to link all student aid to service.

Such a plan will not be effective "if its only thought about as conscription," says Ms. Townsend, adding: "When John Kennedy talked about the Peace Corps, he didn't say, 'Nyah, nyah, nyah.' He said 'Ask what you can do for your country.' I think we really do have to capture that spirit."