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### **Senator Hart Votes to Boost Community Service Efforts across the State**

*“Commonwealth Corps” would join forces with Massachusetts Service Alliance*

**Boston, MA** – The Senate voted for legislation that would establish a new community service force in Massachusetts to address unmet needs in our communities. Called the “Commonwealth Corps,” the program would recruit from a wide-ranging talent pool of college students, professionals and retirees to volunteer on a full-time and part-time basis. Governor Deval Patrick announced the Commonwealth Corps initiative in January.

State Senator Jack Hart (D-South Boston) commented on the Senate session. “This is an opportunity to join together to educate our students, assist our elderly, clean up our neighborhoods and protect our city streets. We must do all we can to maintain and increase the opportunity for service throughout the state,” said Senator Hart. “Through service, citizens of all ages learn responsibility and gain a life-long ethic of civic participation, all of which translates into a stronger, healthier community.”

“The benefits of volunteerism cannot be overlooked,” Senate President Therese Murray (D-Plymouth) said. “Not only would this program provide additional resources for so many people and communities in need, but the personal rewards for those participating will shape their lives in a very positive way.”

Commonwealth Corps would contract with the Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA) for the operation of its programs. The MSA serves as the Commonwealth’s umbrella organization for community service and volunteerism. The program would seek to enroll 1,000 volunteers to provide services for the elderly, the homeless, after-school programs, municipal projects and many other social and community needs.

Another component of the community service initiative would be to create pilot programs at five college campuses for the creation of the Commonwealth Student Corps that would integrate community-service learning into school curriculums to encourage volunteerism. The bill will now go to the House of Representatives.

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