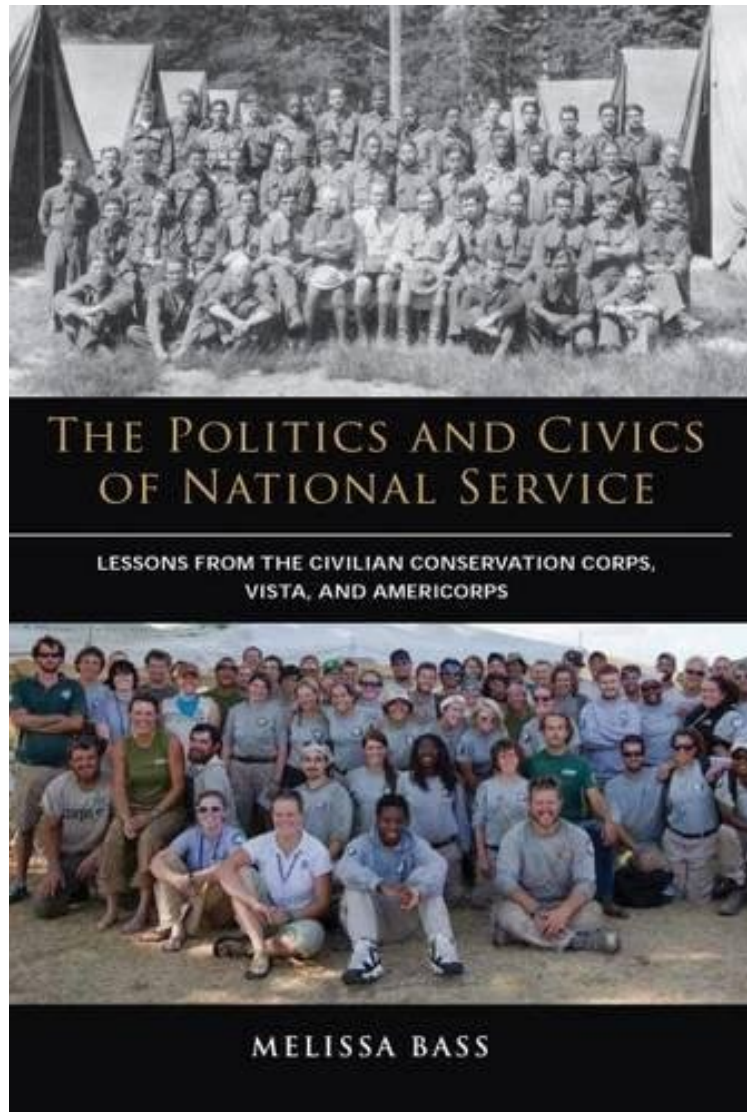


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# The Politics and Civics of National Service: Lessons from the Civilian Conservation Corps, VISTA, and AmeriCorps

*Melissa Bass*

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**Melissa Bass : The Politics and Civics of National Service: Lessons from the Civilian Conservation Corps, VISTA, and AmeriCorps** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Politics and Civics of National Service: Lessons from the Civilian Conservation Corps, VISTA, and

## AmeriCorps:

In 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt created America's first domestic national service program: the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). As part of this program the largest and most highly esteemed of its kind nearly three million unemployed men worked to rehabilitate, protect, and build the nation's natural resources. It demonstrated what citizens and government could accomplish together. Yet despite its success, the CCC was short lived. While more controversial programs such as President Johnson's Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) and President Clinton's AmeriCorps survived, why did CCC die? And why given the hard-won continuation and expansion of AmeriCorps is national service an option for fewer Americans today than at its start nearly eighty years ago? In *The Politics and Civics of National Service*, Melissa Bass focuses on the history, current relevance, and impact of domestic civilian national service. She explains why such service has yet to be deeply institutionalized in the United States; while military and higher education have solidified their roles as American institutions, civilian national service is still not recognized as a long-term policy option. Bass argues that only by examining these programs over time can we understand national service's successes and limitations, both in terms of its political support and its civics lessons. *The Politics and Civics of National Service* furthers our understanding of American political development by comparing programs founded during three distinct political eras: the New Deal, the Great Society, and the early Clinton years and tracing them over time. To a remarkable extent, the CCC, VISTA, and AmeriCorps reflect the policymaking ethos and political controversies of their times, illuminating principles that hold well beyond the field of national service. By emphasizing these programs' effects on citizenship and civic engagement, *The Politics and Civics of National Service* deepens our understanding of how governmental programs can act as "public policy for democracy."

About the Author: Melissa Bass is an assistant professor of public policy leadership at the University of Mississippi.