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For Immediate Release

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Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Acting Inspector General Stephen H Ravas at the 2024 AmeriCorps State and National Symposium

Stephen H Ravas, Acting AmeriCorps Inspector General, gave remarks during the opening plenary of the 2024 AmeriCorps State and National Symposium on Wednesday, September 4, 2024. The theme of the symposium was "Honoring the Past, Building the Future."

Acting Inspector General Ravas's remarks as prepared are below.

Good afternoon, everyone. I want to thank Sonali and the rest of the AmeriCorps State and National team for the opportunity to speak directly to you as part of the symposium kick off.

Some of you may remember me from my speech at this event last year and many of you probably know me from my visit to a gathering with your state commission. For those that have not met me, my role is to lead the Office of Inspector General, an independent entity within AmeriCorps that focuses on protecting the integrity of national service. I am happy to be here to celebrate the last 30 years of your impactful work, as AmeriCorps honors the past and builds the future of national service.

Federal Offices of Inspectors General are an important tool that identifies misconduct in government programs and agency operations. As a group, we return billions of dollars to the Treasury in financial recoveries every year. Our job is to make government programs, like AmeriCorps, more efficient and effective and to provide transparency in government operations.

AmeriCorps' Office of Inspector General has been with you every step of the way over the last 30 years, conducting audits and investigations and making recommendations for a more efficient and effective AmeriCorps. In the last 30 years, AmeriCorps has received nearly \$29 billion, all focused on strengthening lives and improving communities in the US. Over that time, we have had four permanent Inspector Generals, who, along with dedicated staff, have helped the agency to do its best by identifying issues that prevent communities from getting the resources they need, and highlighting areas where AmeriCorps management and its grantees can improve as stewards of federal funds.

As I prepared this speech, I thought back to some memorable events that took place 30 years ago. Nelson Mandela became the first President of South Africa, Pulp Fiction, The Lion King, Forrest Gump all debuted, as did the TV show FRIENDS- which you may have heard of. The World Cup was held right here in the US, Michael Jackson got married, Jeff Bezos created a little company called Amazon, and the first class of individuals serving AmeriCorps as we know it today pledged to "Get things Done for America".

Now I realize that this is the point in my speech where you may be wondering why AmeriCorps asked me to speak to you. Well, part of building the future of AmeriCorps is securing the foundation and the legacy of national service.

The work of the OIG is an important part of ensuring that AmeriCorps, over the next three decades, helps more people, improves more communities, and expands and adds programs. And AmeriCorps needs your help too.

So, what can you do to secure that future? In the last six months, the OIG identified \$6 million identified as unallowable or unreasonable, that violate a law, regulation, or rule, or are not supported by adequate documentation, and \$3 million in AmeriCorps funds that could have been used more efficiently by grantees.

Take a moment to imagine what you could do for your community if you had a portion of those funds. These funds represent opportunity. By managing your grants and funds appropriately, and using appropriate internal controls to prevent and detect fraud, you ensure that more money is available to support AmeriCorps' mission – and ultimately the communities and individuals that benefit from this great program.

How do you do that? You do it by understanding that fraud prevention is a shared responsibility among all of us.

Here are some steps that each of you can take to ensure that your AmeriCorps programs will be stronger over the next 30 years:

- Read and understand the AmeriCorps General Terms and Conditions and the AmeriCorps State and National Grants Terms and Conditions, making sure to educate your staff on them, on appropriate program operations, and on the consequences of fraud.
- Ensure adequate internal controls exist at your organization.
- Always keep your policies updated, and ensure that you and your staff understand and following them!
- Have an effective timekeeping and financial management policy and follow it.
- Report to the OIG without delay any suspicion of fraud, waste, and abuse, or suspicion that a law, regulation or rule was violated.
- Read our [quarterly anti-fraud advisories](#), we have copies at our table outside but they're also all available online.
- Finally, work with your commission and agency points of contact to address your needs.

Remember, our shared ability to ensure more funds reach your communities is dependent on all of us using AmeriCorps funds the way they were intended.

I mentioned earlier that 30 years ago, Nelson Mandela became the President of South Africa. Mr. Mandela was an advocate of service to humanity. He has a famous quote that you may have heard before:

“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.”

Over the next 30 years, let’s work together to build a future that makes an even bigger difference in our communities and in the lives of others.

Thank you and enjoy the symposium.

Learn More

AmeriCorps OIG is an independent office within AmeriCorps charged with promoting economy and efficiency and preventing and detecting fraud in AmeriCorps programs and operations. OIG carries out this mission through independent and objective audits and investigations.

AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteerism, provides opportunities for more than 200,000 Americans to serve their country domestically, address the nation’s most pressing challenges, improve lives and communities, and strengthen civic engagement.

Anyone with knowledge of potential fraud, waste, and abuse related to AmeriCorps programs should contact the AmeriCorps OIG hotline at 800-452-8210 or fill out our webform at <http://www.AmeriCorpsOIG.gov/hotline>.

To learn more about AmeriCorps OIG and our ongoing and completed work, please visit our website at www.AmeriCorpsOIG.gov. To get our most recent updates, you can also follow us on social media: @AmeriCorpsOIG ([LinkedIn](#) and [X, formerly Twitter](#)) or [AmeriCorps OIG](#) on Facebook.