

Building Community in America Act

Senators Mark Kelly (D-AZ) and John Curtis (R-UT)

Background:

American community engagement has declined in recent decades. In 2026, one-quarter of young adults talked to their neighbors regularly, compared to nearly 60 percent in 2012.¹ People have fewer friends and spend less time socializing with others. Religious participation has declined.² Survey data finds that young men appear to be especially disconnected: a 2025 Gallup survey reports that one in four men under age 35 feel lonely;³ a 2023 Surgeon General Advisory described loneliness and social isolation as an epidemic, with health risks comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.⁴

This isn't surprising, considering that Americans spend more than four hours a day on their smartphones,⁵ with almost half of teens online "almost constantly."⁶ American children and teens' screen time has prompted a Surgeon General's Advisory to warn about its risks.⁷ Boys need mentors to support them through schoolwork and relationship challenges, but the wait lists for mentors tend to be much longer for boys than girls.⁸ RAND reports that one in four boys and young men lacks an adult male mentor that they can rely on and talk to about their futures.⁹

About the Legislation:

Research consistently finds that people who volunteer report stronger social connections, greater purpose, better mental and physical health, higher life satisfaction, and greater civic engagement. By calling on more Americans—especially men, who represent just 28 percent of AmeriCorps volunteers¹⁰—to engage in volunteer service, we strengthen both communities and the people who serve. The Building Community in America Act amends the National and Community Service Act and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act to prioritize funding for programs that make proactive efforts to recruit male volunteers for activities including, but not limited to:

- Youth coaching and mentoring
- School attendance or after-school support activities
- Conservation and disaster response
- Public safety, violence prevention, and reentry services
- Skilled trades, workforce development, or apprenticeships

¹ <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/strangers-next-door-the-decline-of-neighborhood-socializing-and-the-class-divide-in-belonging/>

² <https://www.happiness.hks.harvard.edu/february-2025-issue/the-friendship-recession-the-lost-art-of-connecting>

³ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/690788/younger-men-among-loneliest-west.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>

⁵ https://www.consumeraffairs.com/cell_phones/cell-phone-statistics.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com#usage-and-habits

⁶ <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2024/12/12/teens-social-media-and-technology-2024/>

⁷ <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/us-surgeon-generals-advisory-warning-on-the-harms-of-screen-use.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.bbbs.org/posts/>

⁹ https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA4451-1.html

¹⁰ <https://data.americorps.gov/stories/s/AmeriCorps-Participant-Demographics-Dashboard/djuy-4sez/>