

# Pointers For Parents

## Steering Kids Toward Government Careers

by Patricia McGinnis

(NAPSA)—Like every parent, I often talk with my kids about what they want to do when they “grow up.” During these career conversations, I remind them of something that too few parents realize...their Uncle Sam needs them...to answer the call to public service.



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It's been more than 40 years since President John F. Kennedy challenged young people to “ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” There's reason to think about public service as a career option right now: Those who answered that call are retiring, and a new generation of the “best and brightest” is needed to keep our democracy strong.

That's why it's so important for the next generation to step up to the plate. But, according to research conducted by the Council for Excellence in Government, the relief bench looks empty.

The federal workforce is facing an unprecedented crisis. By 2005, more than half of federal workers (some 900,000 employees) will be eligible for retirement. Many of them are senior managers, and as a result, we risk losing an enormous amount of practical knowledge and institutional memory.

It's not just the government workforce that is in peril. According to a recent national youth poll we conducted, young people feel more positive about voting and politics as a direct result of Sep-

tember 11, 2001 and the war on terrorism. But there is a caveat: these events have not influenced their behavior. Today, fewer are voting, volunteering, interested in running for office or considering government service at any level.

We were heartened to learn that 40 percent of the young people we surveyed thought the idea of a government career was intriguing. That's the good news. The bad news is that 62 percent said that nobody has ever asked them to even consider a career in government. The big surprise: 65 percent said that they'd seriously consider a public service career if a parent asked them.

And that's why I'm asking parents to ask their kids to think about government service, whether in the local City Hall or the halls of Congress in Washington, the local fire house, State House or even the White House. For a young person, a career in government can be an opportunity to do interesting work, to have a lot of responsibility, and to meet all kinds of people. These are jobs that can be personally and professionally rewarding, and are opportunities to make a real difference in the lives of so many people.

So please, do something patriotic: Talk to your child about getting involved. It comes down to this: If we are going to turn these disappointing trends around, we must ask our nation's youth to consider public service.

*Patricia McGinnis is President and CEO of the Council for Excellence in Government. To learn more, visit the Council's Web site at [www.excelgov.org](http://www.excelgov.org).*