

Hi, my name is Sharlane Keener and I am an AmeriCorps Alum.

Ten years ago, I flew from Illinois with the baby ahead of my husband. This was my husband's stomping grounds and where we chose to transition to civilian life. He was to follow with the car and our hound. He never made it. I will not go into the details that led to his, and many other Veterans', downward spiral. Here I was – new mom, new widow, no job, no family, no professional or personal network. There were many steps, some faltering, that I had to take to recover and rebuild. One of those steps was AmeriCorps Vista. Of course, I found myself serving Veterans, Active Duty members and their families. This was very fulfilling and helped me plant my feet firmly in Oregon.

I appreciate the education award I received through AmeriCorps even though it is a benefit that is subject to state tax. The stipend was reported for taxes and resulted in shrinking the benefit to me. I hate wearing this hat, but every penny counts to widowed single mom.

I know other Vistas who became aware of this considered it in their choice to use their education dollars in Oregon or elsewhere. By eliminating the tax on AmeriCorps educational awards in our state, you are encouraging AmeriCorps members to stay in the state to use the stipends one of Oregon's higher education institutions. They would be more likely to stay in the state post-graduation and strengthen our workforce and communities.

As my representative, I am counting on you to remove taxes on the AmeriCorps Segal education award to reduce the financial burden on AmeriCorps alumni when they use the award they have earned.

Thank you.

- Sharlane Keener