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[00:00:33] **Speaker 1** Wisconsin was among states that sued over the Trump administration's nearly $400 million cut to AmeriCorps. Subsequently, a federal court issued a temporary injunction restoring its programs and funding. In Wisconsin, about $14 million goes to Americorps programs in schools, health care clinics, and in nonprofits. Where does all this leave the program in Wisconsin? We turn to the executive director of Serve Wisconsin. A state agency that partners with AmeriCorps to recruit and train volunteer workers who receive stipends for living expenses. Jeanne Duffy joins us now. Thanks very much for being here. Thanks for having me. So how welcome was the news that the court issued this temporary injunction?

[00:01:21] **Speaker 2** It was very welcome, it was a joyous moment. It was just a reaffirmation of our work, what we do, and that the rule of law still stands, that you cannot illegally terminate grants.

[00:01:32] **Speaker 1** How disruptive, though, to the programs was the elimination of the grant?

[00:01:37] **Speaker 2** Oh, it's been a roller coaster, and as you know, it's a lot easier to break things than to bring things back. We had almost 400 members serving in April when we got notice that the grant terminations, that the grants were terminated, and many of those people are, you know between ages 20 and 25, so they can't sit around and wait for another six weeks to see if they are gonna be brought back to service. So a lot of our members have already moved on. We're very lucky, many of our programs kept their members on in service, and many, so they can instantly return to service. But it's a hard road to hold to bring things back. What is the purpose of AmeriCorps? Yes, AmeriCorp is a lovely program. Well, so I would say that. But our mission is to bring people together through service, and we serve some of our most vulnerable citizens and communities, and we help connect people in service to build civic engagement. And empathy amongst our citizens and our young people. So every year we have over 1,000 young people primarily serving across the state, from Superior down to Kenosha, and they are doing a variety of things, and through their service they are gaining essential workforce development skills, leadership skills, communication skills, and learning how to bridge divides and becoming engaged citizens. What kinds of programs and where in the state are they? Yeah, so like I said, we are statewide. We have members serving at youth shelters statewide, and they're helping homeless and runaway youth over 1,000 every year get back into safe housing. And what's so sad about that is it often means not going home. We, our AmeriCorps members, are primarily known for working in schools, and every year we help over 17,000 students through tutoring, after-school programs, or getting into college. Summer is a prime time for AmeriCorps. We have conservation programs working across the state, improving over 600 acres of our lands, removing invasive species, planting trees, doing flood mitigation and work such as that.

[00:03:44] **Speaker 1** Wow, a lot of different kinds of programs.

[00:03:48] **Speaker 2** If there's a community need, there's probably an AmeriCorps member serving there.

[00:03:52] **Speaker 1** So at this point, notwithstanding the young people, the volunteers, the members, as they're called, having possibly left, have services returned to normal?

[00:04:02] **Speaker 2** Yes, so we have many programs that staff summer camps, such as Easter Seals and Boys and Girls Club of Greater Milwaukee. So Easter Seels runs two summer camps to help people of all abilities have a quality summer camp experience that many kids love. And AmeriCorps members are being returned to service to help staff those programs. In the Milwaukee area, parents count on summer camps for childcare during the summer. And we have over 50 members who serve in summer camps in the Milwaukee area. So the Boys and Girls Club are bringing those people back to help staff the summer camps. At this point, what is the status of the court process? So we had the grant terminations April 25th and then shortly after the state of Wisconsin joined a multi-state lawsuit for suing against the illegal termination of the grants. We have an injunction and that was last week. And right now the injunction is standing and the federal government has not appealed the injunction. But they have up to 60 days to file an appeal.

[00:05:07] **Speaker 1** So in this period of time, while waiting really for a final resolution, where does that uncertainty leave people in the program, both those who work for it and those who are recipients of it?

[00:05:19] **Speaker 2** Yeah, no. Like I said, it's a rollercoaster. And many people don't want to take the risk because AmeriCorps is a cost reimbursement program. So these nonprofits, they have to expend the money before they get reimbursed by the federal government. So they, by bringing members back, they're putting their own financial security at risk and hoping that they'll get re-imbursed by the Federal Government. The state of Wisconsin, you know, is providing the insurances that we can, but it is a risk. And also, we've committed to members, too, and so members have to know that, you know, these are primarily young people. Maybe they're in college, maybe they're not, but you know they're counting on us for their summer experience. So if it gets terminated, it could disrupt their plans, too. All right, well we will be watching.

[00:06:01] **Speaker 1** Jeanne Duffy, thanks very much. No, thank you for having me. For more on this and other issues facing Wisconsin, visit our website at pbswisconsin.org and then click on the news tab. That's our program for tonight. I'm Frederica Freiberg. Have a good weekend.