

**MONDAY MORNING GROUP OF WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY
ANNUAL ADVOCACY TRIP – WASHINGTON, DC
APRIL 7 – 10, 2025**

FUNDING FOR NATIONAL GUARD YOUTH CHALLENGE PROGRAM FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

ISSUE: The Department of Defense and National Guard’s Youth Challenge program is effectively addressing the United States’ dropout epidemic and benefits local communities, the nation’s ability to compete, and the national economy. However, without continued funding, California’s most vulnerable youth, in Congressional Districts 9, 13, 24, and 45, and their neighboring districts, will lose a life-changing educational resource that has proven scientific data supporting its effectiveness.

ACTION: The Monday Morning Group requests Administration and Congressional support for funding for the Department of Defense’s Youth Challenge program within the National Guard.

BACKGROUND: The National Guard Youth Challenge Program, a preventive rather than remedial at-risk youth program, targets voluntary participants, 16 to 18 years of age, who have dropped out of school or are not satisfactorily progressing, are unemployed or under employed, drug-free, and crime-free.

Youth Challenge is one of the most effective government programs ever created, assisting high school-age students that have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of school. The goal of Youth Challenge is to improve the life skills and employment potential of participants by providing military-based training, a high school degree, physical fitness, and, most importantly, assistance with family concerns and counseling. The program has grown from ten to more than 40 programs since 1993, graduating more than 185,000 of our nation’s high school dropouts.

Federal funding of the Youth Challenge, with a 25% state match requirement, has helped the nation’s youth become confident, educated, and productive citizens. Moreover, RAND Corporation studies have found that every \$1 spent on the program results in a return of \$2.66, a 166% return on investment, including a reduction of social services, which are a strain on government and our society. Youth participants are 86% more likely to attend college than dropouts who do not participate in the Youth Challenge. Last year alone, nearly 1,000 youth graduated from the Youth Challenge Program in California.

The national total appropriation request is \$211,589,000. Of this appropriation, California has historically received a total of approximately \$32 million annually for all its Youth Challenge programs.

Resource History (by Federal Fiscal Year)			
BUDGET	PRIOR YEAR (-2)	PRIOR YEAR	CURRENT YEAR
Requested	\$210,000,000	\$211,589,000	\$211,589,000
Enacted	\$210,000,000	\$211,589,000	\$211,589,000