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001. letter	Constituents to Juvenile Justice Conferees [partial] (1 page)	08/02/1999	b(6)
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COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
Domestic Policy Council
Ann O'Leary
OA/Box Number: 19586

FOLDER TITLE:

Youth and Violence [13

2013-0436-S

rc1264

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
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- P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

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- b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
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- b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]



Alex Aitcheson
32162 Caminito Osuna
Temecula, CA 92592
(909) 302-8128

Educator with 26 years successful experience in all phases of education as a teacher and school/district administrator.
B.S. and M.S., Southern Connecticut State University.
Administrative Degree, University of California, Irvine.

Experiences/accomplishments include

- Mathematics and science teacher for grades 6-12
- Coordinator/teacher for a Federal High School Dropout Special Education Project
- Special project teacher for middle school students involved in gangs
- Owner/Director of a Private Education and Consulting Firm
- Principalships at middle school and high school levels
- Administrator for the first "Accelerated Middle School" in Southern California
- District Director for Alternative Education and "School-To-Career" programs
- District Director for State and Federal Programs
- Lecturer/Instructor at California State University, San Bernardino
- Member of the City of Moreno Valley, CA "Youth Task Force" Committee

Alex is an expert in establishing, developing, and implementing educational programs that empower students, staff, parents and community leaders to address the academic, emotional, physical, and spiritual development within every child's education.

Howard Haas



Educator/Consultant/Producer with 30 years experience throughout the United States, Middle East, and Indonesia. B.S., University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, M.S. and Administrative Degree, Pepperdine University, Malibu, California.

Experiences/accomplishments include:

- Creator and Director of award winning, "Gypsies Educational Theatrics Inc." based in the Middle East and United States
- Lecturer/Instructor, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
- Lecturer/Instructor, Saddleback College, Mission Viejo, CA
- Language Arts and Drama Teacher (K-12)
- Principal of Middle School
- Principal of High School
- Consultant on motivation for "Training Systems Analysis", Indonesia
- Member of the "Mayors Task Force on Gangs", Santa Ana, CA
- District Chairman of the "Boy Scouts of America"

Howard believes that education must tap into and unleash the vast potential within people so that they may fulfill their life's purpose. He is an expert in uniting the community, the business world and the schools.

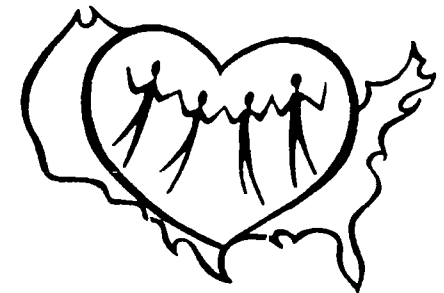
**THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE
KIWANIS CLUB OF LA MIRADA
PO BOX 116
LA MIRADA, CA 90637**



WHY ARE KIDS KILLING KIDS?

IS THERE SOMETHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT?

YES !



LISTEN TO THE CHILDREN !

THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE



CHILDREN ACROSS OUR NATION ARE KILLING EACH OTHER!

PEARL, MISSISSIPPI
JONESBORO, ARKANSAS

WEST PADUCAH, KENTUCKY
SPRINGFIELD, OREGON

LITTLETON, COLORADO

Educators, politicians, community leaders, and psychologists are searching to find answers. Parents have fear that their children could be killed and question if their child is capable of killing! **HAVE OUR CHILDREN BECOME NUMB? IF SO, HOW?** Educators Alex Aitcheson and Howard Haas, in conjunction with the Kiwanis Club of La Mirada, California, believe the way to find the answers and solutions to these questions is to **"LISTEN TO THE CHILDREN"**. They have decided to take these questions to the source - - **our nation's children.**

"THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE" WILL:

- ♦ QUESTION YOUNG PEOPLE NATIONWIDE OF ALL CULTURES, RACES, AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS
- ♦ VISIT RURAL, URBAN, AND SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES
- ♦ PRODUCE A VIDEO DOCUMENTARY OF WHAT OUR CHILDREN ARE SAYING ABOUT THE VIOLENCE
- ♦ SHARE WITH THE NATION WHAT WAS LEARNED BY LISTENING TO THE CHILDREN
- ♦ PROVIDE DAILY INTERNET UPDATES: www.childrencrusade.com
- ♦ PROMOTE A "LISTEN TO THE CHILDREN" SUMMIT

WILL YOU HELP?

The **KIWANIS CLUB OF LA MIRADA, CALIFORNIA,** is supporting "THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE" and encourages your donations to raise the necessary funds that will support this important and timely project.

All contributions are tax exempt and should be made payable and sent to:

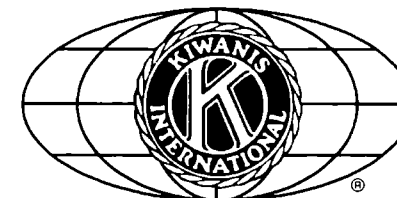
KIWANIS CLUB OF LA MIRADA
P.O. BOX 116
LA MIRADA, CA 90637

For additional information contact:

Alex Aitcheson (909) 302-8128
email: aaitcheson@earthlink.net

or

Howard Haas (949) 582-7287
email: hmhaas@telis.org



Alex Aitcheson
Violence Prevention Consultant

Educator with 26 years successful experience in all phases of education as a teacher and school/district administrator.

B.S. and M.S., Southern Connecticut State University.

Administrative Degree, University of California, Irvine.

- Co-founder of AH-HA Consulting
- Director/Producer for the national "Children's Crusade" project
- District Director for Alternative Education and "School-To-Career" programs (3 years)
- District Director for State and Federal Programs (2 years)
- Principal at middle school and high school levels (10 years)
- Mathematics and science teacher for grades 6-12
- Coordinator/teacher for a Federal High School Dropout Special Education Project
- Special project teacher for middle school students involved in gangs
- Owner/Director of a Private Education and Consulting Firm
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LISTEN TO THE CHILDREN has recieved bipartisan recognition and commendations from U.S. Senators and Congressmen for its ongoing commitment to educating students and helping communities prevent violence among young people.

Sponsored By:

General Motors, Inc., Marriott Hotels, Inc., Kiwanis Clubs Nationwide, Pacific Bell, and True Colors, Inc.

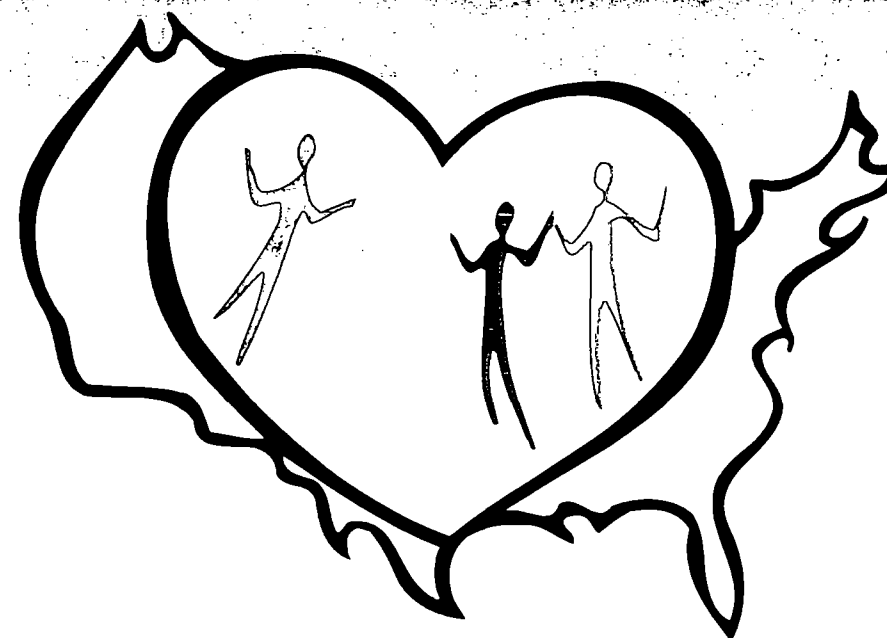


PACIFIC BELL



**STOP
YOUTH
VIOLENCE**

Get Connected



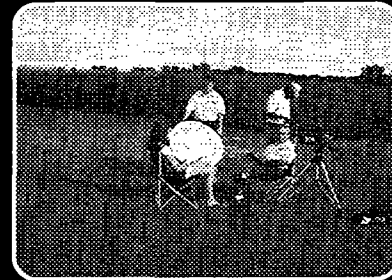
**The Heart of our Nation is our Youth
...Listen to our Youth & Get Connected**

After thirty years of watching kids become increasingly disconnected, alienated, and losing their lives to violence, Howard Haas and Alex Aitcheson were compelled to go on a quest to discover the root causes of violence. They left successful careers as highly recognized school administrators and invested their life savings in a 12,000-mile journey across America.

With a film crew, they documented kids telling us why kids feel lost, angry, and alienated. In hundreds of intimate interviews, Alex and Howard were able to gain the trust of these disconnected youth, so that they could tell us why kids are killing kids.

This story has never been told. Kids of every race, creed, and culture, in the inner cities, the suburbs, the farmlands, and in homeless encampments, reveal fundamental needs that are not being met or honored by their schools, their families, and their communities. These kids want to get connected.

We must listen to their voices to learn how to stop this devastating violence that is ripping apart the fabric of our nation. Alex and Howard will share with you everything youth are telling us about how we can connect with them, in order to ensure the safe and secure future they deserve.



Get Connected

...LISTEN TO THE CHILDREN

Alex and Howard will show you how to get connected to our youth. They are available to schools, businesses, and community groups.

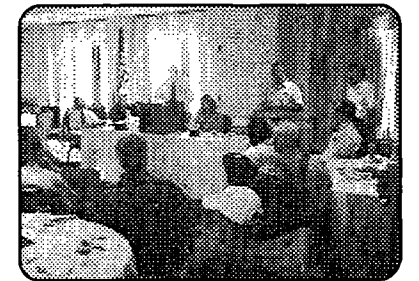
Get Connected Conferences for groups of students, teachers, administrators, parents, businesses, healthworkers, and members of the community demonstrate the root causes of conflict and violence and provide effective means for conflict prevention. Alex and Howard will provide concrete methods for conflict prevention that are simple and enjoyable for all to use. A visioning process and action plan can be part of this conference.

Get Connected Keynote Presentations will enlighten participants at your seminar, conference, summit, retreat, or special event with new information about how to successfully connect to each other and to youth. They will empower your participants with lifelong skills in conflict prevention that they can use in every aspect of life. This interactive presentation will engage your participants in heightened mutual understanding and respect, making your event more successful in its desired goals.

Get Connected Workshops for individual schools and community groups show intimate interviews with kids that tell us why kids feel alienated and disconnected. They will help your participants get connected to each other through character development and by learning how to meet the needs and honor the values of everyone.

Get Connected Educational Assemblies provide an experience that will enhance the lives of all school members. The compelling stories of kids across the nation tell us why kids become violent. Alex and Howard will show everyone how to remove the causes of violence.

Violence Prevention Consulting will show you how you can get your school and community connected. A long-term, research-based approach will be implemented for optimal effectiveness for your school and community.



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Jean Lewis

President, Parents of

Murdered Children

Gordon Rondeau &

Elaine Rondeau

Founders, Action America:

Murder Must End Now

**FIGHT
CRIME**



**INVEST
IN KIDS**

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Brendan J. Fitzsimons

State Operations Director

Marci Wasserman

Research Director

William C. Christeson, M.H.S.

Education Policy Director

Joe Tom Easley, J.D., M.P.H.

Development Coordinator

Jonah S. Van Zandt

TO: Ms. Neera Tanden
FROM: Sanford Newman and Brendan Fitzsimons
DATE: August 6, 1999
RE: Juvenile Crime Legislation

As you consider the Juvenile Crime legislation that is now in conference, we urge that you work to ensure increased funding for programs that keep kids from becoming criminals in the first place and that help troubled kids get back on track.

Specifically, we urge that the final legislation adopted by the conference committee include two crime prevention provisions that were adopted overwhelmingly in the Senate but left out of the House. Those provisions are:

1. The Senate bill's Stevens-Kennedy "Parenting as Prevention" block grant program, adopted unanimously by the Senate.
2. The Senate bill's Hatch-Biden requirement that at least 25 percent of funds appropriated for the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant be used for prevention programs.

Enclosed you will find our letter to the conferees, a victim's of violence sign-on letter, a poll showing the public's support for prevention, the press release from our July 8th victims of violence and law enforcement speak-out in support of prevention, and our *School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan*.

As you will see from these materials, law enforcement, victims of violence and the public believe that prevention works and must be a part of any bill that attempts to reduce juvenile crime.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call us at 202-638-0690. Thank you for your consideration.

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Joe Torn Easley, J.D., M.P.H.

Development Coordinator
Jonah S. Van Zandt

July 15, 1999

RE: Juvenile Crime Legislation

Dear Conferee,

As the Senate and House work out differences in their juvenile crime bills in the coming weeks, we hope that you will work to ensure that three key crime-prevention provisions are included:

1. The Senate bill's Stevens-Kennedy "Parenting as Prevention" block grant program. The quality of parenting is obviously a critical factor in determining whether a child will grow up to be a criminal or a contributing citizen and good neighbor. But many parents are ill equipped to meet, or are overwhelmed by, today's child-rearing challenges. By providing parents with coaching, advice, family counseling, and other services, we can dramatically reduce child abuse and neglect and subsequent delinquency. This provision also established national and regional centers for developing and disseminating knowledge on the best practices in treating children who witness or experience either abuse or other violence. If left untreated, being exposed to such violence can sharply increase the risk that a child grows up to be violent. *This amendment sponsored by Senators Stevens and Kennedy, was adopted unanimously by the Senate.* In the House, the Rule under which the bill was considered did not allow members to vote on the corresponding amendment, sponsored by Rep. Quinn.

2. The Senate bill's Hatch-Biden requirement that at least 25 percent of funds appropriated for the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant be used for prevention programs. Congress has a poor record when it comes to appropriating funds authorized for prevention. That is why, *at a minimum*, it is important to require that *at least 25 percent* of funds appropriated under the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant go towards programs that can keep kids from becoming criminals—programs like after-school and summer youth development programs, and the programs that identify troubled kids and help to get them back on track. *The Senate adopted the Hatch-Biden amendment by a 96-3 vote.*

3. Require, for all block grants in the bill, that grantees include in their grant requests evidence that the type of program for which funds are sought has been shown to be effective, and indicate the steps that have been, or will be taken, to assure that the program implements key elements of the proven models for which it is based. To help grantees meet this requirement, we also urge increased funding for technical assistance to advise block grant recipients on the scientific research on the effectiveness of various approaches to reduce violence. Such language, not currently in either the House or Senate bill would be a technical change, designed simply to improve the odds that grantees would make a good faith effort to review available information about effective program approaches before

spending funds. It recognizes that, even programs called by the same generic name may differ dramatically in content and effectiveness

We also urge you to *exclude* from the final bill House provisions that would, by denying educational services, increase the unsupervised time of youth who are expelled or suspended from school. We all agree that we should have tough sanctions for kids who bring a weapon to school, and that the safety of other students in the school must be paramount. But the existing law already permits schools immediately to suspend or expel students who bring weapons to school. Nothing in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) prohibits schools from doing so.

The House bill, in an apparent attempt to eliminate an imaginary obstacle, would eliminate requirements that disabled students who are expelled or suspended be provided with alternative educational services. Denying education services to kids who have been suspended or expelled may sound tough to those who think all kids love school. But giving a gun-toting kid an extended vacation from school and from all responsibility is soft on offenders and dangerous for everyone else. When children display behavior meriting suspension or expulsion, it is a warning signal that it is time to start looking for the causes of the problem and to provide the proven programs for disruptive kids that are dramatically effective in getting youth back to a healthier path. A decision to put kids who carry weapons out on the street without supervision will cost lives, and will come back to haunt all of us.

Our recommendations about the provisions this legislation should include and exclude are consistent with FIGHT CRIME's **School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan**. Our plan (available on our website at <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports.html>) is based on the most rigorous evidence about what really works to keep kids from becoming violent.

That plan reflects such an extraordinary consensus among law enforcement that its components have already been endorsed by the **National Sheriffs Association**, the **Major Cities [Police] Chiefs**, the **Police Executive Research Forum**, and state law enforcement groups ranging from the **Sheriffs Associations in California, Arizona, and Maine** to the **Police Chiefs Associations in Texas, North Carolina, Maine, Rhode Island, and Illinois** to the **District Attorneys Associations in Illinois, Arizona, and California**.

The evidence is now clear that well designed prevention programs can dramatically reduce crime and violence, and keep kids from becoming criminals— and that these programs remain so under-funded they reach only a fraction of the youngsters who need them. For example:

- In a five-city study, half of a group of at-risk high-school kids were assigned to participate in the Quantum Opportunities after-school program. ***The boys left out of that program were six times more likely to be convicted of a crime*** in their high-school years. Yet between five and seven million youngsters under twelve, and millions more teens, lack after-school programs that put them in touch with caring adults, providing supervision and constructive activities.
- Young people who received a Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentor were **half as likely to begin illegal drug use or to hit someone** as applicants randomly assigned to be placed on a waiting list. Yet such programs, even when they have enough volunteers ready to mentor, lack the funds for staff needed to screen, train, and monitor mentors — without which mentoring programs may be ineffective or even counterproductive.
- The Prenatal and Early Infancy Project assigned half of a group of at-risk mothers to receive visits by specially trained nurses who provide coaching in parenting skills and other advice and support. Careful studies show the program not only **reduced child abuse by 80%** in the

first two years, but that fifteen years after the services ended, **these mothers had only one-third as many arrests, and their children were only half as likely to be delinquent.** Yet these programs are reaching only a tiny fraction of the at-risk families who need them

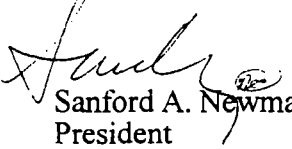
- A Montreal study showed that providing disruptive first- and second-grade boys with social skills training and other services (for the boys and their parents) **cut in half** the odds that they would later be in special classes, rated highly disruptive by a teacher or by peers, or be required to repeat a grade in school — signs that the risk of future violence was sharply reduced. In another study, five years after randomly selected, disruptive, low-achieving, seventh-grade students completed a three-year program involving behavioral therapy and rewards, they were only one-third as likely to have a juvenile record as those who did not receive these services. Yet few resources are available to help communities replicate these or other proven models for troubled kids.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids is an anti-crime organization made up of over 500 police chiefs, district attorneys, sheriffs, victims of violence and scholars in criminology and child development. The people on the front lines of the fight against crime overwhelmingly agree that the most powerful weapons against crime are the proven programs that help kids get the right start, so they become the good neighbors and responsible adults we all want them to be.

We hope the bill emerging from conference committee will reflect this consensus.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Sanford A. Newman
President

P.S. For additional information about the programs mentioned above and other effective crime prevention programs, visit our website at www.fightcrime.org and the website of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at www.Colorado.EDU/cspv/blueprints/index.html.

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Founders, Action America:

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**FIGHT
CRIME**



**INVEST
IN KIDS**

August 2, 1999

Juvenile Justice Conferees
United States Congress
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Conferee,

As people who have experienced the horror of crime and violence first hand, we urge that two key bi-partisan crime-prevention provisions which passed overwhelmingly in the Senate but left out in the House, be included in the juvenile crime legislation.

We believe in tough law enforcement, but we also know that no punishment will bring our loved ones back. It is time to prevent tragedies before they occur so others won't have to experience the pain and violation of losing a loved one to violence. Therefore, we urge you to include in the final legislation:

- 1. The Senate bill's Stevens-Kennedy "Parenting as Prevention" block grant program, adopted unanimously by the Senate.**
- 2. The Senate bill's Hatch-Biden requirement that at least 25 percent of funds appropriated for the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant be used for prevention programs.**

In July, victims of violence joined with law enforcement officials and FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS at the Capitol to speak out in support of prevention measures. Today, we contact you directly.

Crime prevention is everyone's issue. No matter how well we raise our children, if other children do not have the right start, we will all pay down the road, not just in dollars but in lives and grief. When investments like these are shortchanged, every American family is put at risk.

Attached you will find a copy of our press release about the bill and a poll on the public's support for prevention programs. Sanford Newman, President of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, has already written you about the juvenile crime legislation. If he can be of further assistance, or if you would like a copy of FIGHT CRIME's *School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan* (available at www.fightcrime.org) which has been endorsed by several major national and state law enforcement organizations, please do not hesitate to contact their national office.

President

Sanford A. Newman, J.D.

Associate Directors

Amy R. Dawson

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Jonah S. Van Zandt



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001. letter	Constituents to Juvenile Justice Conferees [partial] (1 page)	08/02/1999	b(6)
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Ann O'Leary
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Youth and Violence [13]

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- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
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We hope the bill emerging from the conference committee will reflect the consensus of victims of crime that it is time to make the front-end investments so children grow up to be good citizens and not criminals.

Sincerely,

Jean Lewis
*President, National Organization
of Murdered Children, Inc.*
21 year old son murdered

Marc Klaas
Founder, Klaas Foundation for Children
12 year old daughter abducted/murdered

Gordon & Elaine Rondeau
Founders, A.A.M.M.E.N.
29 year old daughter murdered

Carole Grant Hall
19 year old son murdered

Patricia Gioia
Daughter murdered

(b)(6) [001]
Victim of sexual assault and multiple stabbing

Barbara L. Haralson
Father murdered

(b)(6)
Rape victim

Dr. Dennis Lees
Daughter Murdered

(b)(6)
Assault Victim

Stanley Rosenbluth
Son and Daughter in-law murdered

Joyce Strickland
Daughter murdered by drunk driver

Enclosures:
Press Release 7/9/99 Victims of Violence Speak Out
Public supports prevention poll

9 out of 10 Americans agree: Investing more in preventive programs for kids could greatly reduce crime.

**Agree / Strongly
Agree**



90%

**Disagree /
Strongly Disagree**



9%

**Don't Know /
No Opinion**



1%

Actual Question Wording:

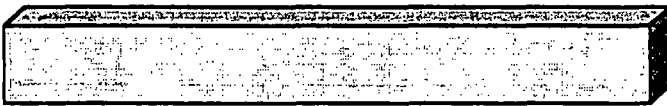
"Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: 'In the long run, America could greatly reduce crime if we invested more in preventive efforts aimed at helping children and youth get the right start in life. For example, community-based coaching for high-risk teen parents to improve their parenting, Head Start and other early childhood development programs, programs for troubled kids, and after-school programs and mentoring.'"

Opinion Research Corporation International, Caravan Services, 1011 respondents, July 1-3, 1999.
Margin of error + or - 2%.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids
www.fightcrime.org

In Fighting Juvenile Crime Should We
Focus primarily on punishment
or
Focus equally on prevention programs
for kids?

**Focus on
Punishment**  **14%**

**Focus Equally on
Prevention**  **81%**

**Don't Know /
Neither**  **5%**

Actual Question Wording:

“Which of these statements comes closer to your views?

1. America's fight against juvenile crime should focus primarily on locking up juvenile delinquents and other punishment when crimes are committed.
2. America's fight against juvenile crime must include strong efforts to lock up dangerous delinquents, but should focus equally on prevention programs aimed at keeping kids from getting into trouble and on efforts to help get troubled kids back on track.”

Opinion Research Corporation International, Caravan Services, 1011 respondents, July 1-3, 1999. Margin of error + or - 2%.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids
www.fightcrime.org



FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

Hundreds of Police, Prosecutors, Crime Victims Dedicated to Preventing Crime and Violence

President
Sanford A. Newman, J.D.

Associate Directors
Amy R. Dawson
Brendan J. Fitzsimons

Communications Director
Philip Evans

Contact: Phil Evans, 202 638-0690

FOR RELEASE: Noon, Thursday, July 8

Include Prevention Measures in Teen Crime Bill, Violence Victims and Police Tell Congress

Poll Shows Public wants More Investment in Kids

As the House and Senate struggle to resolve differences between their juvenile crime bills, parents whose children were murdered and police leaders came to Capitol Hill today to criticize the House version of the bill for shortchanging prevention programs.

They called on Congress to support programs proven to keep kids from ever getting involved in crime and violence. Specifically, they argued for making sure families have access to quality after-school programs, early learning and child care programs for babies and preschool children, parenting coaching, and intervention programs to help troubled kids.

As a first step, they said, Congress should accept the two key prevention amendments passed with overwhelming support by the Senate but never brought up for a vote in the House.

The speakers were leaders of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. They represented more than 500 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, crime victims and violence prevention scholars who comprise the organization.

At today's press conference, Sanford A. Newman, president of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, released the results of a new poll showing that nine out of ten Americans

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids - 2

agree that crime could be greatly reduced if America invested more in programs that help children get the right start in life.

Eighty percent of the respondents to the poll said that while punishment is an element in the fight against juvenile crime, America's efforts "should focus equally on prevention efforts aimed at keeping kids from getting in trouble, and on efforts to get troubled kids back on track."

In an earlier Northeastern University poll, 92 percent of police chiefs nationwide agreed that "America could sharply reduce crime if government invested more in programs to help children get a good start."

"Together," Newman said, "the police chiefs poll and the new poll show that both the public and those on the front lines of the fight against crime -- regardless of party or ideology—are in overwhelming agreement that boosting investments in kids is our most powerful shield against violence.

"Law enforcement and victims of violence have been telling Congress that investing in kids is the ounce of prevention that's worth many pounds of cure. The Senate heard them and added two key prevention amendments with nearly unanimous bipartisan support. But those provisions are missing from the House bill," Newman said.

One of the provisions, sponsored by Sens. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Joseph Biden (D-DE), was adopted on a 96-3 vote in the Senate. It would require that 25 percent of a \$450 million Juvenile Accountability Block Grant be used for prevention. The other provision, a "Parenting as Prevention" amendment sponsored by Sens. Ted Stevens (R-AK) and Edward Kennedy (D-MA), and approved unanimously, would create a block grant to provide parenting coaching and advice to families.

Among the victims of violence at today's press conference was Marc Klaas, whose 12-year-old daughter Polly was kidnapped from home in Petaluma, CA, and murdered.

"Polly's murderer was sentenced to death. But that won't bring Polly back," Klaas said. "No punishment can undo what was done to her and to our family.

"Government can't meet its responsibility to protect our families unless it invests in the programs that really work to keep children from ever becoming violent. Trying to

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids - 3

cure the diseases of crime and violence just by building more prisons is like trying to cure cancer by building more cemeteries. It's too little, too late. "

In making the case that Congress should act immediately to prevent more deaths of children, Klaas said, "forty kids are murdered each week. That's three Littletons a week, 150 a year. Figuring out what would have prevented the tragedy in Littleton may be difficult, but there are proven investments that likely would cut crime 50 percent or more if our elected officials would just make them."

Elaine Rondeau, of Marietta, GA, spoke of her adult daughter Renée, who was stalked and strangled in Chicago. "Each and every one of us has a stake in making sure that every child gets off to the right start. As Renée's parents, my husband and I did everything possible to see that she became a great, contributing citizen of society. But it's not enough. When other kids didn't get the right start, it cost Renée her life."

Carole Grant Hall, of Chicago, spoke of her 19-year-old son, Lateef, who was shot to death on a playground as he knelt to shield a little girl from gunfire.

"My son heard shots and gave his life to shield a toddler from senseless gunfire," Hall said. "I don't ask that courage of our leaders. But when we know that investment in kids cuts violence, it's time to take a stand. Drop the politics and raise the shield of prevention so that families all over America can stop lowering loved ones into early graves."

Chief of Police John J. Millner, of Elmhurst, IL, said, "those of us who have been on the front lines in the fight against crime are fed up with the people pretending we don't know how to dramatically reduce crime and violence.

"Fight Crime: Invest in Kids' School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan spells out four proven steps that could sharply reduce violence by helping kids get the right start.

"This shouldn't be a partisan issue. In my state, no one fought harder than the republican leader of the Illinois House to begin implementing our School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan. Congress ought to come together in the same way, and the Senate is beginning to do that."

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids - 4

Commenting on the legislation before Congress, Chief Flynn said "it is shortsighted, it borders on the irresponsible to shortchange crime prevention in the name of crime control."

National law enforcement organizations such as the Major Cities {Police} Chiefs Organization and the national Sheriffs Association and state associations of police chiefs, sheriffs and prosecutors across the country support Fight Crime: Invest in Kids' School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan.

Jean Lewis, president of the National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children, also has voiced support for the School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan. calling on "our nation's leaders to provide the educational child care, after-school youth development programs and parenting coaching programs we know prevent crime by giving at-risk kids the values and good start they need to become good neighbors."



FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

Hundreds of Police, Prosecutors, Crime Victims Dedicated to Preventing Crime and Violence

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Philip Evans

Summary of the Prevention Provisions in Senate and House Juvenile Crime Legislation

The Senate passed *The Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offender Accountability Act* (S. 254) on May 20th. The House passed the *Consequences for Juvenile Offenders Act of 1999* (H.R. 1501) on June 17th. The next step is for the Senate and the House to work out the differences between their respective juvenile crime bills in conference committee.

The Senate and House bill both include new prevention block grants, which can be used to fund a variety of prevention programs, including mentoring, youth development, and substance abuse programs. The Senate bill *authorizes* \$200 million, while the House bill does not specify an amount. In the past, however, only a small fraction of anti-crime funds authorized for prevention has actually been appropriated (funded). So supporters of prevention funding are concerned that these block grants could be more symbolic than real.

Two prevention amendments adopted by the Senate showed it is beginning to reach the same consensus as law enforcement officers and victims of violence about what really works to prevent crime.

- **"Parenting as Prevention."** An amendment, *adopted unanimously by the Senate*, offered by Senators Stevens (R-AK) and Kennedy (D-MA), that would:
 - 1) Create a block grant enabling communities to provide parenting coaching and advice to families, which can reduce child abuse and neglect and other risk factors that lead to later delinquency.
 - 2) Authorize \$50 million to establish centers for developing and disseminating knowledge on the best practices in treating children who witness or experience either abuse or other violence. If left untreated, being exposed to such violence can sharply increase the risk that a child grows up to be violent.
- **"25 Percent for Prevention."** An amendment adopted *by a vote of 96-3*, sponsored by Senators Hatch (R-UT) and Biden (D-DE), requiring that 25 percent of the \$450 million Juvenile Accountability block grant be used for prevention programs, such as after-school and other youth development programs, drug and alcohol treatment programs, and school counseling. (Uses of the remaining 75% include graduated sanctions, construction or remodeling of juvenile facilities, and incarceration of juveniles).

Unfortunately, the House juvenile crime bill contains neither of these crime prevention provisions. Representative Jack Quinn (R-NY) sponsored a "Parenting as Prevention" amendment in the House, but House leaders did not permit consideration of the amendment on the floor.

While the Senate's bill falls short of representing a comprehensive prevention program, it is a step in the right direction.

That's why, as the Senate and House work out differences in their juvenile crime bills in the coming weeks, we urge that the final bill include the Senate "Parenting as Prevention" block grant, and the "25% for Prevention" provision.

But even if these provisions are adopted, it's only a first step. An even bigger challenge for Congress is to eliminate our nation's *crime-prevention gap* — the gaping shortfall between what it would take to help our nation's kids get the right start in life and what we actually spend.

"Early childhood and youth development programs can lead us to a stunning victory against violence. When these investments are proven to save lives and tax dollars, why shouldn't policy-makers provide the funding that will enable communities to get the job done?"

—former U.S. Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson

- Barnett estimates that the cost, including increased crime and welfare costs, of *failing* to provide at least two years of quality educational child care to low-income children is approximately \$100,000 per child. That's a total of about \$400 billion for all poor children now under age five.
- A recent study by Professor Mark A. Cohen of Vanderbilt University estimates that for each high-risk youth prevented from adopting a life of crime, the country would *save \$1.7 million*.
- A recent Rand Corporation report shows that, even without counting the savings to crime victims and society, the resulting *savings to government* alone from effective early childhood programs *exceeds by two to four times the cost of the programs*.

Law Enforcement United in Calling for Crime-Prevention Investments in Kids

Who says these four steps are among our most powerful weapons to fight crime?

- The hundreds of law enforcement leaders and crime victims who make up FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS.
- Over the last six months, virtually every major national law enforcement organization — including the **Major Cities [Police] Chiefs' Organization**, the **Police Executive Research Forum**, the **National Sheriffs' Association**, and the **National District Attorneys' Association** — have adopted forceful calls for boosting critical crime prevention investments like these.
- In a Northeastern University poll, *92 percent of police chiefs nationwide agreed that "America could sharply reduce crime if government invested more in programs to help children and youth get a good start" by "fully funding Head Start for infants and toddlers, preventing child abuse, providing parenting training for high-risk families, improving schools and providing after-school programs and mentoring."* Nine out of ten chiefs also agreed that *"if America doesn't pay for greater investments in programs to help children and youth now, we will all pay far more later in crime, welfare, and other costs."*

"Police leaders know America's commitment to putting criminals in jail must be matched by its commitment to keeping kids from becoming criminals in the first place."

— Los Angeles (CA) Chief of Police Bernard Parks

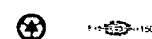
For citations of studies referred to above, visit www.fightcrime.org



Launched in 1996, FIGHT CRIME is led by hundreds of America's leading police chiefs, prosecutors, sheriffs, crime victims, and leaders of police officer organizations. Major funding for its operations is provided by:

William T. Grant Foundation* • Edna McConnell Clark Foundation • John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation • DeWitt Wallace Reader's Digest Fund* • David and Lucille Packard Foundation • Ford Foundation • Public Welfare Foundation • Naomi and Nehemiah Cohen Foundation • Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation • Rockefeller Family Fund • Woods Fund of Illinois • McCormick-Tribune Foundation • The Stern Family Fund • Nathan Cummings Foundation • Butler Family Fund • Irving B. Harris Foundation • Institute for Civil Society • Neisser Fund • American Income Life Insurance Co. • New Prospect Foundation • William C. Graustein Memorial Fund

*Indicates that funding is for research dissemination.



FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

President
Sanford A. Newman

Associate Directors
Amy R. Dawson
Brendan J. Fitzsimons

Research Director
William C. Christeson

From America's Front Line Against Crime: A School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan

AS AN ORGANIZATION OF HUNDREDS OF POLICE CHIEFS, SHERIFFS, PROSECUTORS, CRIME SURVIVORS AND LEADERS OF POLICE OFFICER ORGANIZATIONS, we are determined to see that dangerous criminals are put behind bars. But anyone who thinks that jailing a criminal undoes the agony crime leaves in its wake hasn't seen crime up close.

America's anti-crime arsenal contains no weapons more powerful than the proven programs that help kids get the right start — like quality educational child care, youth development programs for the after-school and summer hours, child abuse prevention, and intervention programs proven to help get troubled kids back on track.

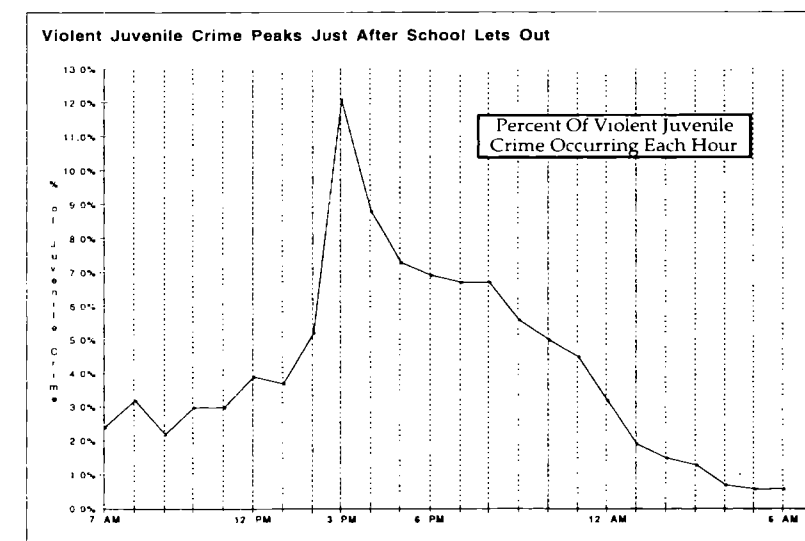
Yet today, inadequate funding for Head Start, educational child care, after-school youth development programs and counseling for troubled kids leaves millions of children at needless risk of becoming violent or delinquent teens and adult criminals — and leaves every American at needless risk of becoming a victim.

We call on all public officials to adopt a four-part plan to dramatically reduce crime and violence and adult crime, and help young people learn the skills and values they need to become good neighbors and responsible adults. While no plan can prevent every violent act, this common-sense plan — based on our experience and the latest research about what really works to fight crime — can make all of us safer.

Four Steps to Dramatically Reduce School and Youth Violence

1. Assure all school-age children and teens access to after-school, weekend and summer youth development programs to shut down the "Prime Time for Juvenile Crime."

In the hour after the school bell rings, turning millions of children and teens out on the street with neither constructive activities nor adult supervision, violent juvenile crime suddenly *triples* and prime time for juvenile crime begins. On school days, the peak hours for such crime are from



3:00 PM to 6:00 PM. These are also the hours when kids are most likely to become victims of crime. They are the peak hours for teen sex, and being unsupervised after school doubles the risk that 8th-graders will smoke, drink alcohol or use drugs.

Quality youth development programs can cut crime immediately and transform this Prime Time for Juvenile Crime into hours of academic enrichment, wholesome fun and community service. They protect both kids and adults from becoming victims of crime, and cut teen pregnancy, smoking, and drug use, while they help

Plan 1/29/98

"When the peak hours of violent juvenile crime are between the end of school and 8:00 P.M., it's just common sense to provide the after-school programs that give kids the values and skills they need to say 'no' to crime and violence."

— Sheriff Patrick Sullivan (R-Arapahoe County, CO)

youngsters develop the values and skills they need to become contributing citizens. For example:

- When a public housing project intensively recruited youths to join in a new after-school program, **arrests among its teen residents plummeted to one-fourth of their previous level**, while those among the teens who lived in a nearby comparison project were actually going up by two-thirds.
- High school freshmen boys randomly selected from welfare households to participate in the Quantum Opportunities after-school program were **only one-sixth as likely to be convicted of a crime** during the high school years as those not selected. Together, the boys and girls who participated in the program were **50% more likely to graduate high school on time**.
- Young people who received a Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentor were **half as likely to begin illegal drug use or to hit someone** as applicants randomly assigned to a waiting list.

In short, failing to provide programs like these can multiply by as much as four times your family's risk that at-risk kids will become delinquent.

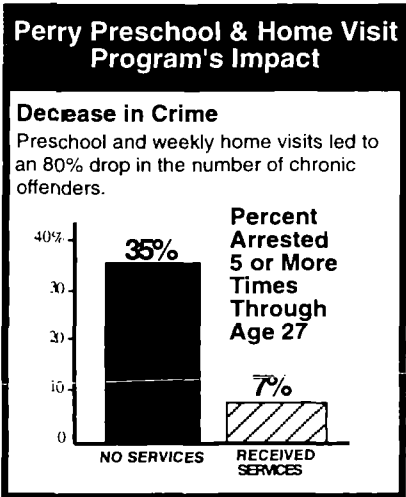
2. Assure all babies and preschool children access to the quality educational child care programs proven to cut crime.

Rigorous studies, hard experience, and brain pictures from modern medical equipment tell the same story: In the first few years of life, children's intellects and emotions, and even their ability to feel concern for others — a prerequisite to "conscience" — are being permanently shaped. When parents are at work trying to make ends meet, programs providing nurturing, stimulating, educational child care for babies and toddlers can not only prepare children to succeed in school but also dramatically reduce crime. For example:

"America's fight against violence must begin in the high chair, not the electric chair. Anything less leaves America's police fighting with one hand tied behind our backs."
— George Sweat, Director, Office of Juvenile Justice (North Carolina): former Chief of Police, Winston-Salem (NC)

- In Ypsilanti, Michigan, low-income three- and four-year-olds randomly assigned to be in the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation's preschool program were **only one-fifth as likely** to have become chronic lawbreakers at age 27, compared to similar children who did without this educational child care.
- In Syracuse, at-risk infants and toddlers enrolled in a quality child development program, with parenting support for their mothers, were **only one-tenth as likely** as similar children to be delinquent ten years later.

In other words, failing to make sure that at-risk kids have access to quality child care and development programs like these can multiply by five to ten times the risk that they will grow up to lead a life of crime. When millions of struggling parents are forced to leave their children in inadequate child care, we all pay a terrible price.



3. Help schools identify troubled and disruptive children at an early age, and provide children and their parents with the counseling and training that can help kids get back on track.

When elementary school children display disruptive behavior, it is a warning signal that it is time to start looking for the causes of the problem, and to provide the proven social skills training, counseling, and other help for the children and their families that can lead them back to a healthier path. For example:

- A Montreal study showed that providing disruptive first- and second-grade boys with services like these **cut in half** the odds that they would later be in special classes, rated highly disruptive by a teacher or by peers, or have been required to repeat a grade in school — all signs that the risk of future violence has been sharply reduced.
- Five years after randomly selected disruptive, low-achieving seventh-grade students completed a three-year program involving behavioral therapy and rewards, they were only one-third as likely to have a juvenile record as those who did not receive these services.

4. Improve deficient parenting and prevent child abuse and neglect by: a) Offering high-risk parents in-home parenting-coaching; and b) making sure child protective, foster care and adoption services have policies and enough well-trained staff to protect and heal abused and neglected children.

Being abused or neglected multiplies the risk that a child will grow up to be violent. Almost three million children are reported abused or neglected each year. Child protective and foster care services in most states lack adequate staff, and often the training or policy support, to protect children and to see that those who have been maltreated get the nurturing care and treatment needed to help them heal. We must also act *before* abuse takes place to expand parenting-coaching and family support programs that prevent children from being abused and neglected, prevent subsequent delinquency, and improve other outcomes for children. For example:

- The Prenatal and Early Infancy Project randomly assigned half of a group of at-risk mothers to receive visits by specially trained nurses who provide coaching in parenting skills and other advice and support. Rigorous studies show the program not only **reduced child abuse by 80%** in the first two years, but that fifteen years after the services ended, **these mothers had only one-third as many arrests**, and **their children were only half as likely to be delinquent**.

The Bottom Line: Investing in Kids Saves Lives and Money

When America fails to invest in its children and youth, we pay far more later — not just in lives and fear, but also in tax dollars. The federal treasury will actually have *more* money to dedicate to other uses a few years from now — whether for social security, paying off the accumulated national debt, or tax cuts — if we invest *today* in programs to help kids get the right start. For example:

- Economist Steven Barnett found that the High/Scope Foundation's Perry Preschool study **saved \$150,000 per participant in crime costs alone**. Even after subtracting the interest that could have been earned by investing the program's funding in financial markets, the project produced a **net savings of \$7.16** — including more than six dollars in crime savings — for every dollar invested.

"We could be saving thousands of lives — and sparing thousands of families unimaginable heartbreak — by investing up front in the proven early childhood care and youth development programs that can turn kids away from crime."
— Jean Lewis, President, National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children

of Special Interest

First Statement

on
Youth Development
2

Next Statement

on
After School and
Summer Programs

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Positions for Youth

Public Policy Statements of the
National Collaboration for Youth

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NATIONAL
COLLABORATION
FOR YOUTH

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THE NATIONAL COMMONS

A Prospectus

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March 1999

***“Freedom needs
a place to sit down.”***

— Hanna Arendt

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I.

Executive Summary

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"With all due respect to the ancient arts of law and diplomacy, the recent development of systematic, teachable techniques for getting at the roots of conflict, and engaging multiple parties in disciplined and voluntary collaborative problem solving, represents something new in the 5,000 years of recorded history."

John W. Gardner
Secretary of the Department of HEW
in the Kennedy Administration
and founder of Common Cause

"Dialogue turns out to be a highly specialized form of discussion that imposes a rigorous discipline on participants. If they fail to observe the discipline, they still derive the benefits of ordinary discussion. On the other hand, when dialogue is done skillfully, the results can be extraordinary: long-standing stereotypes dissolved, mistrust overcome, mutual understanding achieved, visions shaped and grounded in shared purpose, people previously at odds with each other aligned on objectives and strategies, new common ground discovered, new perspective and insights gained, new levels of creativity stimulated and bonds of community strengthened."

Daniel Yankelovich in his forthcoming book
The Magic of Dialogue (1999)

The National Commons is a place dedicated to convening dialogues among people of diverse views, experience, and influence to find common ground solutions leading to concrete, joint action to address problems of critical national importance.

Through the creative and expansive employment of promising and proven approaches to dialogue and collaborative problem-solving, **The National Commons** will serve as a meeting place for people with different points of view and a dynamic laboratory for American democracy in the 21st century.

The National Commons assumes that convening diverse people to work collaboratively on daunting national problems can yield innovative, integrative, and enduring solutions not otherwise possible. It assumes that no one individual or perspective holds all the answers to any particular problem and that better, stronger solutions will emerge by fostering communication among different points of view. It further assumes that an atmosphere of respect, trust and civility will foster an environment where creativity can flourish, shared vision can develop, and joint, inspired action can emerge.

The goal of **The National Commons** is not to create more polite discussion of critical national issues or find least common denominator compromises that excite none of its participants. Instead, it seeks *fresh, integrative solutions that result from enhanced problem solving capacities unleashed from a rich interplay of differing perspectives.*

We sorely need such a forum. We live at a time where increasingly complex and interwoven challenges confront the United States and the world. Public confidence in the ability of our public and private institutions to address those challenges is at a low point, and politicians of all persuasions express deep frustration with the political and policy systems in which they operate. There is widespread concern about a loss of both civility and civic engagement. We clearly need to find new ways to address these challenges; ways that raise the bar on what we can expect from our leaders and fellow citizens.

Too often today, public discourse is marked by partisanship and rancor. Political candidates frequently demonize their opposition. Interest groups often operate with tunnel vision, locking into hard line positions in order to raise money and rally their troops. The media often add fuel to the fire by exaggerating conflict, either to boost ratings or as a misdirected strategy to appear balanced. Too much time and energy is put into winning arguments rather than solving problems. And too frequently, those with the most money and influence prevail in the marketplace of ideas to the detriment of other legitimate stakeholders.

The National Commons will model a different approach. It will apply the values of collaboration and civility to the public policy process. In doing so, it will build on the highly successful track record of the many institutions that have employed “common ground” approaches to resolving public policy issues. Working in courts, legislatures, state and federal agencies, and the national and international policy arena, these organizations have built a solid foundation of expertise and experience in a variety of fields that can be applied to challenges of national magnitude.

The National Commons will employ the most talented practitioners and promising approaches of the dialogue field. It will foster innovation and creativity, testing and refining its methods continually over time. A key goal is to create “unlikely” alliances among interested parties. Just as businesses in recent years have struck unprecedented partnerships across corporate lines, a new alignment of stakeholders on critical issues can be formed for societal advantage.

As a laboratory for our democracy, **The National Commons** is committed to capturing the individual and collective wisdom of citizens. Individual, “unaffiliated” citizens will be engaged in every aspect of its work — from serving on its governing Council, to framing issues, to participating in dialogues and implementing strategies. Traditional methods of outreach and state of the art electronic technologies will be employed to bring the collective common sense of large numbers of citizens into **The National Commons’** initiatives.

The key elements of **The National Commons** approach include:

- assembling skilled, multi-disciplinary teams representing differing economic, social, and political perspectives to engage in intense dialogues over time,
- promoting trusting personal relationships and partnership among dialogue team members,
- defining the dimensions of the problem they will address,
- identifying shared goals and values,
- revealing the differing assumptions and fundamental issues among participants,
- crafting common ground solutions, and
- designing pragmatic, achievable action plans for addressing key aspects of critical national problems.

The National Commons will provide expert assistance for all phases of this work, including facilitation of the parties' long-term implementation of action plans. This could include reconvening the dialogue teams as necessary.

The size and diversity of the multi-disciplinary dialogue teams assembled will depend upon the issue chosen. Likely candidates for inclusion will be: leaders from government, business, and labor; experts in the field; citizens; practitioners; and others, such as artists, religious leaders, and philosophers, who bring unique sensibilities to the table.

The National Commons will carefully select the issues it addresses, focusing on problems of national urgency that affect a broad cross section of the public. Possible issues include violence, education, health care, poverty, individual and family values, economic growth, the environment, the operation of government, spiritual well-being and others. In addressing issues, **The National Commons** will be cognizant of the profound interconnectedness between the United States and the rest of the world.

Beyond initiating its own dialogues, **The National Commons** will seek additional expressions of its core values in the public policy arena. This could include training other organizations to use its methodologies, or serving as a forum where outside parties such as Congress, the Executive Branch, or state government leaders can address various issues. In addition, **The National Commons** will carefully document and evaluate its work, sharing and publicizing both substantive results and lessons learned in conducting its processes.

The National Commons leadership will reflect its underlying values of diversity and inclusiveness. The leadership Council will include not only eminent leaders from government, business, labor and academia, but also experts in dialogue, grassroots community leaders, spiritual leaders, citizens, artists, and others.

Once fully operational, **The National Commons** will employ a highly motivated, respected, and expert staff of professional managers, public policy analysts and researchers, facilitators, strategists, and communicators. Phased in operations will require about \$6 million over the first three years of operation, reaching an annual operating budget of \$3 to \$4 million by year four.

Those who have conceptualized **The National Commons** harbor no illusions about the difficulty of the work. It is an ambitious enterprise that will require enormous skill and patience to succeed. Underlying **The National Commons** is a fundamental belief in the common humanity of men and women of all ages, races, and creeds. If they are convened in a manner that honors their differences, yet provides a path to common understanding, the potential for bettering the human condition is greatly enhanced. As former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell recently stated after his peacemaking role in Northern Ireland: "Problems human beings create, human beings can solve."

II.

The Challenge and Opportunity

II. The Challenge and Opportunity

"We have gone through a cycle of declining trust in the institutions of our democracy. The presidency, Congress, the courts, the political parties all have been weakened by a cross-fire of attacks on their integrity. Cynicism about government rarely has been greater."

David Broder

The Washington Post, January 6, 1999

"Washington has become disconnected. The parties can't speak convincingly to the messy reality of large but inevitably limited government. Political rhetoric often seems contrived. Except in token ways, Democrats can't create new programs and Republicans can't cut taxes. Barred from genuine action, politicians become more strident in their debates and more vicious in their personal attacks. They consort mostly with their own "core constituencies" and sympathetic ideologues, deepening their isolation and illusions."

Robert J. Samuelson

The Washington Post, January 6, 1999

On the eve of the 21st century, there is an exciting opportunity to capitalize on a new generation of problem-solving tools to address the increasingly complex challenges that confront the United States and the world. Whether the challenges are:

- achieving success in a global economy,
- promoting economic growth and environmental responsibility,
- healing the racial divide in the U.S.,
- reinforcing positive family and personal values,
- reforming our education and health care systems,
- reducing the high rates of poverty and violence in our society,
- combating the growth of intolerance and loss of civility in our country, or
- caring for an aging population with a growing life expectancy,

there is growing recognition that we need to find new ways to respond to them.

In recent years, public confidence in the nation's ability to discuss and resolve important social problems has steadily eroded. Whether described as a failure of leadership, or increased posturing and polarization among political parties, or a lack of faith in government, or a decline in civility in public dialogue, this loss of confidence is reflected in consistently low voter turn-out, the popularity of alternative candidates who run against the "system", and a general civic disengagement perceived in neighborhoods and communities across the country. Regardless of the cause, there is ample evidence that the collective

work of the public, private and non-profit sectors falls far short of its potential in addressing issues of widespread public concern.

Part of the explanation lies with the “win/lose” paradigm that often characterizes civic engagement in this country. Typically, policy debates are won by those who enter the fray with the most power and money. The policies that result too often fail to provide lasting answers to the underlying problem, serving instead as lame compromises driven by political expediency. The politics of advocacy, in which specialized interest groups compete for power and prominence, further exacerbates the process. Even when advocacy proves effective, it often leaves behind bitter divisions, with the “losers” spoiling for another fight.

As Deborah Tannen suggests in *The Argument Culture*, our energies are often dissipated in winning arguments, rather than solving problems. We have institutionalized ways of discussing issues that actually heighten and emphasize our differences rather than promote cooperative resolution of them. This is particularly true at the national level, for several reasons:

- Burgeoning numbers of interest groups promote their particular agenda. In order to excite their constituencies and raise money for their efforts, they often overstate their case or demonize the views of their opposition.
- The media frequently add fuel to the fire. Far too often, members of the media feel they must find or heighten opposing views in order to appear “balanced” or actually hype conflict and scandal as a way to boost interest and ratings.
- Perhaps the most toxic of all discourse appears in political campaigns. Negative advertising and character attacks are a campaign staple, justified as necessary to win elections. People in one party or interest group often attack the views and character of others without ever attempting to find common ground, much less mutual respect.

This is not to say that the current system does not work at all. There are many people and organizations who promote their agendas in a civil manner and seek the common good. And there are many more individuals who either stand up to the excesses of the current system or would gladly join in reforming it.

Yet, we need places and processes that can create better answers to national problems than either the random competition of ideas in the marketplace or the formulation of policy in highly charged, partisan settings. We need approaches that take the best from people of varying perspectives and experience to find integrative and lasting solutions to the daunting challenges of the 21st century.

Fortunately, an emerging generation of collaborative decision making and dispute resolution tools hold great promise for breakthrough solutions to critical national problems.

There are several alternative dispute resolution processes — including mediation, facilitation, multi-stakeholder collaborative decision making, and others — that reflect a society-wide openness to a new paradigm of finding “win/win” solutions.

The goal of such approaches is not to create a more polite discussion of issues, even though tolerance and civility are important. The goal, instead, is to raise the quality of public policy by harnessing the vast and creative problem-solving capacities that diverse people and institutions have to offer. To do that will require a full, and even passionate, presentation of different points of view. Only with the full and open expression of these perspectives can differences be clarified and a full range of possible solutions, including entirely new options, emerge.

A fundamental assumption of these inclusive approaches is that stronger, more durable answers will emerge. And, if common ground solutions are devised, unexpected and powerful new alliances can form, transforming conflict and defensiveness into collaboration and creativity. Moreover, finding common ground answers, even if they are only partial solutions, by parties formerly perceived as adversaries on a particular issue lends credibility to the course of action they jointly recommend.

There is a great need to bridge, but not paper over, the honestly held differences that exist in our society. We need institutions that support the notion that our common humanity runs deeper than any of our opinions on the issues of the day. Whether one believes that:

- free market values are relied upon too much or too little in public policy decisions, or
- there should be more government or less government, or
- the “establishment” is the cause of or the answer to all social ills, or
- our society is too permissive or too restrictive,

a failure to effectively communicate across belief systems often means a lost opportunity to synthesize the best ideas into long-term solutions. There are precious few opportunities for people to relate in safe settings where they might see they share common values and goals with others, including those normally seen as adversaries.

As Hannah Arendt put it, “Freedom needs a place to sit down.” **The National Commons** is one such place.

III.

Mission, Principles and Leadership

III. Mission, Principles, and Leadership

“There is a great need for civil, substantive dialogue to get beyond posturing on the major issues facing this country. If you are successful in building The National Commons, it could have a significant, positive impact not only in resolving important issues but in modeling new ways for people to discuss and act on them.”

Leon E. Panetta,
former Member of Congress and
White House Chief of Staff

The National Commons is a place dedicated to convening dialogues among people of diverse views, experience, and influence to find common ground solutions leading to concrete, joint action to address problems of critical national importance. Just as the “commons” provided a physical place for past generations of Americans to come together on matters of shared interest, so **The National Commons** today will provide a meeting place for those holding disparate ideas on issues of great national importance.

The National Commons (TNC) will build on the pioneering work of other organizations and agencies in successfully forging “common ground” solutions to international and domestic policy issues. It will do so by: (1) enrolling talented, engaged, and diverse individuals; (2) in a skillfully facilitated, enriched dialogue over time; (3) that leads to a milieu of deep trust and open communication; (4) that provides people with new ways of seeing/analyzing issues; and (5) results in the formulation of common ground solutions, action plans, and alliances to implement change.

Overseen by an eminent, diverse and talented governing Council, **TNC** will serve as an impartial, expert convener of these public policy “action dialogues”, assembling multi-disciplinary teams of people to devise joint solutions (including implementing strategies) to specific national problems. These teams will function as a “Manhattan Project” for that particular issue, in the sense of including individuals with the differing viewpoints, experience, and talent necessary to deal with the problem. **TNC** will provide highly competent support for all phases of the project.

In performing its work, **TNC** will be guided by the following core operating principles:

- **TNC** will be strictly non-partisan and will not lobby on specific policy issues.
- **TNC** will not only facilitate collaborative dialogue, but will assist and support participants in *their* implementation of practical and far-reaching changes that address fundamental problems affecting the United States and the world.
- **TNC** will be pragmatic, flexible and opportunistic in pursuing its mission, adjusting its approach to finding common ground solutions as circumstances warrant.

- **TNC** will value diversity and inclusiveness in the composition of its governing Council, staff, and operating bodies.
- **TNC** will facilitate and value civility, open dialogue, collaboration, and respect for differences.

The National Commons already has received endorsement from national leaders, including: former White House Chief of Staff and Member of Congress *Leon Panetta*, Representative *JoAnn Emerson*, and former Members of Congress *Tom Downey* and *Vic Fazio*. Further endorsements are expected.

An extraordinary group of accomplished individuals has provided guidance to assist the development of **TNC**, many of whom will continue in leadership and advisory roles as **TNC** is established. They include:

- Chris Carlson, Co-Executive Director, Policy Consensus Initiative, Santa Fe, New Mexico
- Laura Chasin, Director, the Public Conversations Project, Watertown, Massachusetts
- David Chrislip, author and teacher on civil society, practitioner of collaborative processes, Boulder, Colorado
- Seymour H. Fersh, author, teacher, and former Education Director of the Asia Society
- William A. Galston, former Deputy Assistant to President Clinton and current Director of the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy at the University of Maryland
- Kelly Johnston, Executive Vice President for Government Affairs and Communications of the National Food Processors Association and a former Secretary of the United States Senate under Majority Leader Robert Dole
- Terry L. Lierman, President, Capitol Associates, Inc., former Staff Director and Chief Clerk, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
- Nicholas A. Lore, Director, Rockport Institute, and author, *The Pathfinder: How to Choose or Change Your Career for a Lifetime of Satisfaction and Success*
- Carolyn Lukensmeyer, Executive Director, Americans Discuss Social Security
- John Marks, President, Search for Common Ground
- Patricia McGinniss, President and CEO, Council for Excellence in Government
- Elizabeth Neumeier, labor-management arbitrator
- Mary Skelton Roberts, Senior Associate, The Keystone Center
- Ambassador Dennis Ross (advisor only on general conceptual issues), Special Middle East Coordinator, U. S. Department of State
- Susan Sechler, Director of Global Programs, The Rockefeller Foundation

TNC has been conceived and designed by a highly diverse and skilled team of professionals, including managers, experienced facilitators of collaborative processes, strategic thinkers, policy experts, spiritual leaders and others. Indeed, the organizers are representative of the range of expertise and viewpoints that will characterize **TNC's** governing Council, staff, dialogue teams and general operations. Several members of this group are expected to play key operational roles either as staff, advisors, or Council members once **TNC** is firmly established.

Members of this group, sometimes joined by advisors listed above, have met repeatedly since February 1998 to develop the concept of **TNC**, refine the language describing it, develop operating protocols, identify potential leaders, and assist in fundraising. Members of the Organizing Committee include:

- Daniel Bowling, Executive Director of Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR)
- Eric Collier, CEO of BottomLine Solutions, that works with public and private sector organizations to capitalize on the diverse skills and talents of their employees
- Alan R. Crippen II, Senior Fellow, Director of Academic Programs, Family Research Council
- Jessica Dibb, teacher, counselor and founding director of Inspiration Community, Inc., a non-denominational, integrative spiritual studies and community service organization located outside of Baltimore, MD
- Robert Fersh, former President of the Food Research and Action Center, a national anti-hunger organization, and former staff member for three Congressional committees; has served as coordinator of TNC
- Mark Gerzon, of Boulder, Colorado, author of *A House Divided: Six Belief Systems Struggling for America's Soul*, and designer/facilitator of working sessions of the 1997 and 1999 U.S. House of Representatives Bipartisan Congressional Retreat; has served as principal advisor to TNC
- Cherie Harder, Domestic Policy Director for U.S. Senator Sam Brownback, and a former senior staff member of Empower America
- Judy Leon, Senior Vice President and Director, Message Development and Media Training for Powell Tate, a Washington, D.C. public relations and communications firm
- Rob Stein, former Chief of Staff at the U.S. Department of Commerce, and currently a managing partner of the Women's Growth Capital Fund in Washington, D.C.
- John Steiner, based in Boulder, Colorado, a networker, organizer, and fundraiser around the issues of peace, the environment, and collaborative governance
- Marta Tellado, former Director of the National Issues Project of the University of Maryland's Academy of Leadership, and a senior aide to former Senator Bill Bradley
- Wes Watkins, Vice President for Leadership Programs at the Center for Policy Alternatives in Washington, D.C., where he leads extensive training programs on values and public policy for state legislators

IV.

The National Commons

Niche:

Building on

Existing Expertise

IV. The National Commons Niche: Building on Existing Expertise

"I use consensus process to resolve public policy problems simply because it works. The complex nature of issues today requires an integrated collaborative approach to ensure sound lasting solutions."

Oregon Governor John A. Kitzhaber

The Work of Colleague Organizations

TNC will build on and complement the successful public policy work of many individuals and organizations in the dispute resolution/collaboration field. These organizations provide invaluable models and experience that can inform the work of **TNC**. **TNC** will look for opportunities not only to work collaboratively with these other groups but to support the field generally.

Key affinity organizations provide specific examples of the success of collaborative processes and important insights on how to successfully engage in them. Here are several examples:

- *Search for Common Ground*, based in Washington, D.C., has performed groundbreaking work in resolving conflicts, particularly, although not exclusively, in the international arena. Working in such countries as South Africa, Macedonia and Iran, Search has helped bring disparate, if not warring, parties together to work for common purpose. Domestically, Search has been active on the issues of abortion and race. On abortion, its programs have successfully fostered communication among antagonists in several communities across the country, resulting in working partnerships to prevent teen-age pregnancy. They maintain a "toolbox" of approaches that can be applied as each situation warrants.
- *The Public Conversations Project (PCP)* designs and facilitates dialogues among people and parties in conflict. Much of its work focuses on abortion, tensions due to social class differences, disputes over forest use, conflicts over homosexuality and religion, and differences among leaders in the field of population and women's health and rights.

The last category provides a specific example of the power of the PCP's work. In 1993, the PCP was recruited by three national foundations to deal with strained relationships among leaders of advocacy groups concerned with population growth and women's reproductive health. The timing was critical because these differences threatened the possibility of capitalizing on the opportunities presented to U.S. delegates to the upcoming 1994 United Nations Conference on Population and Development in Cairo.

The PCP organized a weekend retreat, which led to subsequent meetings, to initiate a constructive dialogue among key players. One U.S. delegate summarized the results as follows: “. . . (P)eople began to hear the arguments — and the feelings — of the others, and soon began to have a respect that in some cases even became affection. Suspicions about “bad motivation” and underhanded agendas were worked out; meanings behind language differences that had once caused conversations to erupt into flames were understood and in some cases new language was created. Real differences were identified and points of common ground separated out. Representatives of communities that were not well understood were able to explain positions and give important background to help others understand those positions. And finally, a substantive framework for thinking and discussing the issue that felt comfortable and fair for all of the players was developed.”

- *The Policy Consensus Initiative (PCI)* serves as an umbrella organization for more than 30 state level dispute resolution programs. PCI, founded in 1997, encourages states to use conflict resolution tools to resolve policy disputes and negotiate change in order to benefit all citizens. Materials developed by PCI provide the following two examples of state level collaborative problem solving that relate to the work of **The National Commons**:

- 1) In 1996, Oregon faced a significant threat to its economic well-being when the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposed listing two groups of coho salmon in Oregon under the Endangered Species Act. Over a period of decades, the production of coho salmon in the area had dropped precipitously.

Governor John Kitzhaber assembled the key stakeholders on this issue: sportsmen, commercial fishermen, timber and agricultural interests, public and private agencies, and conservationists. Over a six month period, the Governor himself served as the primary convener of and mediator at these meetings. The end result was a plan, which included proposed state legislation, that met the needs of these various constituencies by identifying measures both to restore the coho salmon and improve water quality statewide. The NMFS decided not to list coho salmon in Oregon on the endangered species list and Oregon now awaits an evaluation as to whether the measures it is taking are successful in restoring abundant coho salmon.

- 2) In January 1994, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment received a notice from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) indicating that the level of money states would receive for HIV prevention programs would depend considerably on how well the state engaged all concerned parties in developing its prevention plan. CDC's condition not only required the state determine how it would comply to maximize grant money, but also raised the underlying questions of what programs should be initiated and under whose supervision. Tensions existed among state and local health departments, private agencies, and a variety of community and advocacy groups about the best possible approach.

The state health department assembled a coordinating committee to design a community planning process to develop a statewide HIV prevention plan. To mediate the planning process, the coordinating committee hired the National Civic League and CDR Associates, a Colorado-based conflict resolution organization. The first meeting of the planning group included 110 people, including individuals with HIV and AIDS; gay men; the African-American, Latino and Native American communities; HIV prevention specialists; doctors, nurses, and other health care specialists; health care educators; case managers and social workers; and various religious organizations.

Over a six-month period, the group moved from discussion of process and data to a painstaking negotiation of an action plan. By December, a consensus was reached on a comprehensive course of action, including such matters as needle exchange, comprehensive health education, condom availability, and abstinence education. The result was a successful three year plan for HIV prevention that maximized CDC funding and established a continuing mechanism to guide HIV prevention in Colorado in a collaborative manner.

There are many other relevant examples of successful collaborative activities that could be provided from the work of these and other organizations. These groups constitute a rich network of mutual support for **TNC**, particularly since many leaders from these organizations are advising **TNC's** development.

Among the many other groups with which **TNC** either has established or will seek to establish positive working relationships are:

- The Aspen Institute
- The Keystone Center
- RESOLVE
- The Carter Center
- CDR Associates
- Harvard Program on Negotiations
- Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution
- National Institute for Dispute Resolution
- Academy of Family Mediators
- National Association for Community Mediation
- National Coalition Building Institute
- National Civic League
- National Conference on Peace Making and Conflict Resolution

TNC Niche

While there are similarities between the work of many of these groups and **TNC**, **TNC** will fill a unique role not served by any existing institution. The key distinguishing characteristics of **TNC** are:

- It will focus on solving major national problems in a “Manhattan Project” manner. It will assemble diverse teams of stakeholders and interested parties to address these problems. Many other organizations in the field operate more as mediators of specific disputes among particular parties and relatively few undertake issues of national scale.
- It will engage policymakers directly in the collaborative problem-solving process. In the past, few Members of Congress or the Executive Branch have participated in such a process.
- It will engage talented people beyond those with a direct stake in the outcome in dialogues about critical national issues. Typically, dispute resolution processes have involved only those who are true “stakeholders” in the process. **TNC** seeks to involve artists, religious leaders, philosophers and others to bring non-traditional and broadening sensibilities into the process.
- It will engage citizens deeply in its work. Citizens will serve on its governing Council and on various dialogue teams assembled. A variety of means will be employed to ensure that the wisdom and common sense of citizens collectively will have a genuine role in **TNC** deliberations.
- It will work to build lasting relationships of deep trust among participants. While trust is an important ingredient in any dialogue process, **TNC** will focus especially on building a level of trust that can transform the dialogue and extend beyond the specific issues under discussion.
- It will address a wide variety of issues identified by the governing Council as major challenges the nation faces. Many other organizations tend to focus their activity in one major subject area.
- It will develop and oversee a multi-layered plan to implement common ground solutions that are identified. **TNC** will facilitate participants’ efforts to build broad constituencies in support of this plan of action. Unlike most commissions, **TNC’s** working groups will not only issue a final report but will secure specific commitments for action from relevant individuals and organizations.

V.
**The National Commons
Approach**

V. The National Commons Approach

"(I)f The National Commons succeeds, it will accomplish much more than simply addressing the specific issue under discussion. For example, we know that when these collaborative processes work they tend to mitigate and heal divisions between competing interests, groups, races, etc.; they engage citizens deeply in addressing the problems that concern them, rather than alienating them as most public processes do; and they build the capacity to negotiate future conflicts in ways that better reflect the common good. The experience of working together creates the networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate communication and cooperation for mutual benefit; it builds social capital rather than destroying it. These are important results that should be emphasized."

David Chrislip,
author and teacher on civil society, January 15, 1999

While certain core principles will apply to the work of **TNC**, experienced practitioners in the field stress that the process utilized for each "action dialogue" must be carefully tailored to each situation. The issue under discussion, the nature and number of participants, time constraints, and a variety of other circumstances not only will influence the design of the process but will require flexibility as the process unfolds.

Key to developing a dialogue plan will be a careful "mapping process" achieved through in depth interviews of participants. These interviews will provide intelligence on where substantive disagreements lie and what processes can best promote dialogue. In some instances, it may be useful to convene a few key players before moving to a full dialogue. In others, especially where there already is a high trust level, shuttle diplomacy can serve as a partial substitute for full group sessions.

Critical to the success of **TNC** will be its ability to address three interrelated challenges:

- getting the "right" people to participate;
- successfully moving participants to find common ground solutions;
- ensuring that the work of the dialogue team is relevant to the policy process and makes a difference in the world.

Clearly, **TNC** will be successful only if it can skillfully convene people who have the knowledge, experience, and influence necessary to effect change on a particular issue. Such people cannot be assembled, nor will they participate constructively, unless they are invited by people they trust and respect. And even if such people are assembled, there is no guarantee that their deliberations will be heeded by the outside world. **TNC** and its participants will have to be strategic and imaginative in mapping implementation plans that

have a real impact. An important element will be identifying strategies that engender and/or reflect strong popular support for their proposed solutions.

TNC's success should be gauged by both immediate and long-term results. While **TNC** aims to effect change on critical national issues, it will also measure success by the extent to which it elevates and civilizes public discourse through transforming relationships. If new avenues of communication are created among former adversaries, or key parties gain new perspectives on their issues, or a new level of civility is achieved in how they interact, these all are important successes. And they can be vital ingredients for forging common ground solutions over time.

Who Convenes?

The matter of who convenes any dialogue team of **TNC** is of great importance. Unless the invitation to participate comes from individuals who inspire confidence in the value and fairness of the process, **TNC** will not attract the caliber of participants necessary to meet its mission.

A key to **TNC's** ability to convene will lie with leadership of its governing Council. These individuals — who could be former presidents, Cabinet members, current or former senators, members of Congress or corporate CEOs, eminent academics and authors, civil rights and union leaders, or others — will alone lend great credibility to the work of **TNC**. In many instances, these leaders would participate on dialogue teams assembled to address a specific issue.

In addition, the convening body should reflect the perspectives and experiences of the broader community that will be engaged on the underlying issue. For instance, some groups who have felt marginalized may be reluctant to participate unless those who reflect their perspective and experience are central organizers of the dialogue process. As a result, **TNC** Council and staff will identify “convening chairs” who invite the fullest possible participation of relevant parties.

Building Trust and Partnership

TNC will focus on building trusting personal relationships among participants throughout the dialogue process, but especially in its earliest stages. There is an art to balancing the normal impatience of busy, results-oriented people to engage on the issues and the need for “person to person” rather than “position to position” interactions. The payoff to building the trust is that breakthrough solutions are more likely to emerge.

Building trust not only will expand the range of communication and cooperation on the issue at hand, but will contribute to a long-term shift in relationships that bear fruit over time. In fact, Laura Chasin, Director of the Public Conversations Project, recently wrote: “We have learned a somewhat counterintuitive lesson — that in some situations the best way to reach satisfying joint outcomes in the long run is to set aside efforts to problem solve and focus on relationships and communication in the short run.”

To the extent possible, **TNC** also will encourage a sense of partnership among individuals involved. Once differing perspectives are aired and understood, the likelihood of finding common ground answers will be enhanced if participants work jointly to address all the legitimate concerns that are raised. In some instances, it will be crucial for “adversaries” to understand and respect the limits of what other parties can agree to, given the constituencies they represent. If they work as partners, there is a greater likelihood of identifying creative answers that not only work in the short run but stand up over time.

Steps of the Dialogue Process

The key steps of the **TNC** dialogue process include: *issue selection; participant identification; meetings/facilitation; and implementation plan*. The exact approach in each of these steps will be adjusted depending upon the issues and players involved and experience over time.

Issue Selection

TNC Council will determine which issues to address, using the following criteria as a guide:

- The issue is urgent, but not a crisis.
- It is definable into one or more concrete, solvable problems.
- It affects a broad cross-section of the American people.
- There is potential for finding common ground and forming new alliances for action.

Other factors may be considered, such as the level of public interest in the issue and the extent to which the issue is being addressed elsewhere. In addition, **TNC** must consider whether there are vested economic interests in the outcome and how that might affect the success of any action dialogue undertaken.

Based on guidance from **TNC** Council, staff will prepare background information on selected issues, detailing both expert opinion and the views of citizens. It is possible that opinion polling and focus groups would be employed to inform the process. Once the issue options are presented, **TNC** Council will engage in a collaborative dialogue to select and frame the issue to be addressed.

The following examples illustrate the types of national issues that could be addressed by **TNC**. Although these are “domestic” issues, **TNC** will encourage an awareness of how its work is affected by and will influence the rest of the world.

- the need to educate our children to have strong character and values
- youth violence
- the challenge of achieving shared prosperity in this country
- the role of money in politics
- the high levels of stress that affect the health and well-being of many Americans
- the need to develop new models of health care and wellness promotion
- the role of the U.S. in the international marketplace
- the challenge of utilizing free market principles to build a civil, humane society

This list is illustrative, not exhaustive. Other topics and formulations of these issues will be considered.

Participant Identification

The size and diversity of dialogue teams convened will depend on the subject matter chosen. Two key questions will guide this determination: What perspectives and experiences are needed to deal with the problem? If all those assembled reached agreement on a solution, would they have the power to implement it? The answers to these questions will determine both the quantity and personal and professional qualities of the participants.

On most issues, dialogue teams are likely to include a mix of people: leaders in the field; key political leaders and opinion makers; experts in the subject matter; business and labor leaders; religious/spiritual leaders; artists; citizens; scientists; practitioners; grass roots leaders.

In identifying participants for dialogue teams, **TNC** Council and staff will balance the following considerations:

- *Who are the key players on a particular issue?* On some issues, such as campaign finance reform, heavy involvement of national elected officials would be required because any solution would probably entail national legislation. On other issues, it may be that industry leaders, experts, or interest group leaders with opposing views could find common ground and implement solutions with little involvement of elected officials. Fundamental to the selection process is enlisting individuals with the ability to make a difference. In some instances, those who speak for major constituencies will be essential. In others, the level of expertise and credibility of an individual will be indispensable.

- *Diversity.* There may be a tension between formulating dialogue teams small enough to build trust yet diverse enough to include key stakeholders and others who bring important contributions to the dialogue. **TNC's** bias will be toward inclusiveness. This not only creates the broadest possible investment in the process and outcome of its work but assures room for "non-traditional" voices at the table.
- *Chemistry.* There is an art to bringing together people who can make the process work. One of the key goals is to bring together people of differing viewpoints, including those deeply passionate about their positions, but who also have the capacity to listen to and learn from other points of view, and be willing to adjust their positions based on new information or insight.
- *Commitment to the Process.* A key to the success of **TNC** approach will be the level of participation of dialogue team members. Building trust depends on consistent participation. Participants may be asked to sign a "dialogue compact", to underscore the commitment involved.

Meetings/Facilitation

Although the number and manner of meetings will vary by issue, **TNC** envisions the dialogue process involving 6-8 retreat type meetings (lasting two days or more) over a period of two years, supplemented by extensive less structured work towards the dialogue goals. The major tasks to be achieved in approximate sequential order are:

Year 1

- Reaching agreement on the dimensions of the problem to be solved and the underlying factual assumptions that relate to it
- Clarifying value assumptions
- Fully expressing different perspectives on the problems to be addressed
- Clarifying differences on/finding new ways to view the problems
- Engaging others outside the dialogue group to contribute to the process

Year 2

- Identifying common ground solutions or partial solutions
- Creating a cooperative and intensive implementation plan that involves all relevant parties
- Engaging outside constituencies to join in the implementation plan
- Establishing a mechanism for enforcement and follow up on the implementation plan

Throughout this period, there will be a continuing need for additional research to support the group or for outside experts to provide assistance. Informal contact between meetings is likely and aspects of the work could be delegated to subgroups.

In addition, every effort will be made to engage a wider audience of interested individuals and organizations to gain their input and support for the end result. Depending upon the need for confidentiality, this could entail modern electronic communications strategies and/or media coverage of the process. In addition, the dialogue team could meet with important outside groups or experts, hold public hearings, conduct polling or focus groups, or otherwise invite outside involvement to ensure the broadest possible input and accountability. Some consideration will be given to conducting satellite or “feeder” dialogue groups in different areas of the country that could contribute to the national dialogue. These groups could be organized by the growing number of local and regional organizations involved in collaborative public policy processes.

All of this underscores the importance of utilizing facilitation of the highest possible skill. **TNC** already has assembled among its advisors individuals with extraordinary experience and knowledge in facilitation. Through these advisors **TNC** will assemble a roster of individuals who can design appropriate dialogue processes for each dialogue team. Given the import of **TNC’s** work, it is hoped that prominent, widely recognized individuals in the field will not only serve on **TNC** Council but also participate in dialogue sessions.

While the models of dialogue and facilitation described above may prove workable, **TNC** will stand ready to adjust as necessary. There may be times when “shuttle diplomacy” will be necessary to bridge the views of important players. Or, important strides may be possible in some issue areas that do not require the full model of dialogue and implementation described above. Conversely, the timeframe and the model envisioned may be insufficient if unexpected problems arise. **TNC**, through its Council, staff, and advisors, will respond creatively and opportunistically to whatever challenges arise.

Implementation Plan

If common ground solutions catalyzed by the **TNC** are to be successfully implemented, there must be careful planning to achieve this result. It’s been said that “Follow up is the chariot of genius.” Without an effective implementation plan, the work of the **TNC** could easily meet the fate of so many other worthy commissions whose important reports do little beyond gather dust on bookshelves.

TNC’s ability to convene public officials and other influential individuals will help ensure that its solutions are implemented. Indeed, a central objective of **TNC’s** dialogue process is to assemble individuals whose collective clout on any given issue could transform the landscape when common ground, “win/win” solutions are forged. Moreover, because the actors at the table will reflect such differing, and often conflicting, perspectives, the achievement of substantial common ground would not only make these solutions noteworthy and credible, but also would be likely to energize new coalitions and alliances working for common purpose.

As part of the common ground dialogue, each participant would be asked to make commitments to implement the agreed to solutions. Members of interest groups would influence the workplans of their organizations; policy leaders would bring the ideas to their colleagues; opinion leaders would attempt to influence the public; and so on.

A key challenge that **TNC** will face is the “re-entry” problem. Many participants may find it difficult to return to their home base and find either support or resources to implement the “common ground” solutions reached. To counter-act this problem, **TNC** will encourage participants to keep their co-workers and constituents as fully informed and involved as is practicable throughout the dialogue process; and, to the maximum extent possible, engage principals of organizations as participants.

Potential action goals for implementation can range from enacting legislation, to gaining Executive Orders of the President, to changing regulations, to launching public education campaigns, to influencing the standards and practices within a given industry, to engaging state and local officials to undertake new approaches to serious local problems, to creating a unified effort among various important “independent sector” organizations, to catalyzing additional dialogues — or any combination of these or other efforts.

TNC will monitor the implementation of the action plan and reconvene participants as necessary. Strategies for implementation will require continuing development and refinement over time. In some instances, a key ingredient to success will be engaging elected officials and policymakers to an extent not yet attempted. Beyond that, the **TNC** intends to forge new, imaginative strategies for action that are consistent with the collaborative values with which it operates.

TNC’s role throughout implementation is that of convener, facilitator, and catalyst. It will not engage in lobbying or similar efforts to influence policy. Its central role is to maximize the effectiveness of dialogue participants and other involved parties in their efforts to actualize solutions they have identified.

VI.

Strategic Alliances

VI. The National Commons: Strategic Alliances

"I believe deeply in the need for leaders to move beyond preconceived stereotypes and labels to develop relationships of trust in addressing the nation's important issues. In fact, that is why I work very hard to develop relationships and trust among all of my colleagues, regardless of their political affiliation or ideological tilt. From my experience, I believe that the ideas you hold for (The National Commons) hold real promise. I do believe that many people are looking for avenues to address important, consensus-based national priorities in dialogues that are not filled by partisanship, but a true interest in finding common ground with people of good will. Given the right atmosphere, conversations that lead to productive consensus can and do occur."

U.S. Representative Jo Ann Emerson,
Eighth District, Missouri

In order to have the broadest possible impact, **TNC** will work in partnership with a wide array of individuals and institutions. Some will be important sources of information and ideas; some will lend experience and expertise to conducting successful dialogues; others will be sources of people who will engage in dialogues; and still others will be key partners in a multi-layered process of implementing solutions.

It is especially important for **TNC** to establish strong linkages with formal policy making bodies, such as Congress, the Executive Branch, and state elected officials. By itself, **TNC** has no formal power. Its influence stems from the quality of its work and the diversity and inclusiveness of its participants. If **TNC's** participants are to be successful in creating what author David Chrislip calls a "constituency for change", they must establish both credibility and an ability to work with those having real policy making authority. While not all issues will require implementing actions by branches of government, the involvement and support of public officials ordinarily will be crucial to **TNC's** success.

Here are key categories for **TNC's** strategic allies:

- *Public Officials:* Especially in matters of national importance, **TNC** will need strong working relationships with the U.S. Congress and the Executive Branch. In many instances, key leaders from these branches of government will participate or be represented in these dialogues. **TNC** will want members of Congress to be aware of and attentive to its work, especially when proposed solutions require Congress to act. In this area, the involvement of former members of Congress, Cabinet officials and other Executive Branch members may also prove useful. The input and involvement of state and local officials also will be crucial to the work of **TNC**, and will be encouraged through

direct contact with individual leaders and through organizations like the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislators, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National League of Cities, and the National Association of Counties.

- *Colleague Organizations:* As discussed in Section IV, **TNC** will forge supportive and collaborative relationships with other organizations that apply “common ground” approaches to solving social problems, such as Search for Common Ground, the Public Conversations Project, The Keystone Center, RESOLVE, the Aspen Institute and others. These organizations are natural allies for the work of **TNC**; there are many possibilities for synergy with them. Also, professional organizations such as the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR) can be a great resource for providing people and strategies to further the work of **TNC**. These organizations also serve as a natural constituency for supporting and promoting the work of organizations like **TNC**.
- *Think Tanks and Academia:* **TNC** will establish strong ties to think tanks and academic centers of varying political philosophies and substantive expertise. These institutions can provide research and information to inform dialogues and individuals who may be either participants or resources to **TNC**. These institutions include: The Heritage Foundation, Brookings Institution, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the American Enterprise Institute, the Center for Policy Alternatives, the Progressive Policy Institute, the Cato Institute and many others. Within many universities there also are various centers, such as the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy at the University of Maryland, and countless individuals who can contribute to the work of **TNC**. A key task for **TNC** will be to bridge the expertise of academics with policymakers, practitioners, and citizens.
- *Business and Labor Leaders:* The perspective of leaders from these communities will be essential contributions to any dialogue on major issues confronting this country. In many areas, corporations are forming “unlikely” alliances that could serve as models for **TNC** participants. The active involvement of business and labor leaders also will be critical to successful implementation strategies.
- *Interest Groups:* These organizations will be very important to **TNC** process. They will bring informed and often passionate points of view to the table and can mobilize important grassroots constituencies, public education capacities, and political clout to assist implementation of common ground solutions.
- *The Media/Key Opinion Leaders:* Depending on the issue, members of the media may participate in **TNC’s** dialogues. **TNC** will establish strong relationships with journalists and commentators to insure that the public and policymakers are well informed about the important work that occurs under **TNC** auspices.

VII.

Developing

The National Commons:

First Steps and

a Larger Vision

VII. Developing The National Commons: First Steps and a Larger Vision

“Today, progress on critical issues is impeded by divisions within our politics and by flaws in our political institutions that provide incentives for polarization rather than agreement. We urgently need to develop institutions and mechanisms — such as (The National Commons) — that not only break through these divisions but also model new ways of resolving them.”

William A. Galston,
former Deputy Assistant to President Clinton and
currently Director, Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy,
University of Maryland

TNC not only intends to employ dialogue to address critical national issues but to apply the principles of dialogue to its internal operations as well. To the extent practicable, its governing Council and staff will conduct business in a manner consistent with its underlying values of collaboration, respect for differences and consensus building. The end result will be a less hierarchical and more inclusive mode of operating that maximizes the contribution of each individual.

The organization’s operating bodies will have a defined structure and a clear delineation of responsibilities and lines of authority. Yet at the same time, **TNC** will encourage open communication and a broadly shared partnership among the individuals carrying out its work.

Year One

In the first year, the key tasks are to build a sound organizational base, identify an initial substantive area of focus, and launch the first dialogue. Perhaps the most pressing task is to assemble a superb leadership team to guide the growth of the organization. Here is the agenda for the first year:

- *Organizing TNC Council:* A critical step in the first year will be to build a talented and diverse governing Council that can guide **TNC** over a period of years. Initial Council leaders (the “organizing chairs”) will recruit a superb team to constitute the full Council. Members will come from government, business, labor, academia, grassroots organizations, citizens, spiritual leaders, scientists, practitioners and others. The Council will reflect diversity in political philosophy, experience, age, race and gender. These leaders will play an indispensable role in enrolling other Council members and dialogue participants, establishing credibility for **TNC**, and attracting ample financial support for its operations.

- *Assembling a Core Staff:* In the initial year, **TNC** will operate with a lean core staff, consisting of four full-time professional staff, and two administrative/support staff, assisted by paid outside advisors and fellows. These staff would perform the key functions of: providing leadership to the enterprise; enrolling Council members; researching issue options and assembling the first dialogue; fundraising; meeting planning; and outreach to strategic allies. Staff positions include: President, Program Director (to oversee specific dialogues), a professional researcher, and communications/outreach director. Initially, one person would serve as office manager and another would provide secretarial support.
- *Fundraising:* **TNC** will not commence operations until funding commitments assure a level of confident operations in its initial years. (Estimated operating costs total \$6 million over the first three years). However, even if early funding commitments are in place, immediate work will be necessary to implement a comprehensive plan for long-term financial support. In order to meet its promise, **TNC** will require substantial human and financial capacity. The fundraising plan will include a strategy for approaching private and corporate foundations, philanthropic individuals, and others who (1) are inspired by its mission generally or (2) would have an interest in funding a dialogue on a specific subject matter. The involvement of individuals of national prominence in the work of **TNC** should provide important access to funding sources. **TNC** will also work to generate its own revenues through release of reports or other information of use to the public and policymakers.
- *Two national foundations,* The Nathan Cummings Foundation and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, have provided seed money to fuel the development of **TNC**. In addition to these two funders, **TNC** has communicated with additional potential funding sources, such as the C.S. Mott Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, the Open Society Institute, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and others. Through dozens of individuals who have taken an interest in **TNC**, an energetic outreach effort will occur to a variety of potential funding sources.
- *Launching an Initial Dialogue:* **TNC** will begin intensive planning for an initial dialogue in its first year of operation. Consistent with its underlying principles, the subject matter for this dialogue will be determined through a collaborative consultation of its governing Council. Essential to the success of any dialogue will be framing an issue that invites widespread interest and concern. The choice of topic and the participants convened should reflect the best collective thinking of **TNC** Council. In fact, this very process is seen as invaluable for orienting Council members to collaborative processes and building a sense of relationship and teamwork among them.

The Council would select the initial topic and participants according to criteria explained in Section V. Based on guidance from the Council and thoughtful research, the staff would present a menu of options for the Board to consider or refine. Initial options would include:

- the education and character development of our children,
- economic well being and shared prosperity in the 21st century, and
- revitalizing civility and shared values in our society.

All of these topics are of broad national concern, affect a large cross-section of the public and can be defined into concrete, solvable problems.

Careful research into the chosen subject matter would then occur and a highly skilled facilitation team would be assembled to plan the process of engagement. A substantive, multi-day meeting of the dialogue team would be convened as soon as practicable. Depending upon the complexity of the issue under discussion and the nature of the players involved, the work of the dialogue team would proceed for one to two years.

The Vision for Years Two Through Five

By year two, **TNC** will be building rapidly toward full capacity, with a goal of reaching that status by the end of year three. **TNC** will convene at least one new dialogue per year, while continuing to support dialogues and implementation plans initiated in prior years.

TNC will not function as a think tank, policy center or lobbying organization. Instead, it will a dynamic and fluid forum that pioneers new processes of dialogue, coalition building, and multi-layered solution implementation on issues of critical national importance. Holding firm in its commitment to cooperative, collaborative approaches to resolving these issues, it will be a constantly evolving learning organization — a true laboratory for American democracy.

Over time, **TNC** should be seen as a place where difficult societal issues can be brought for resolution in an atmosphere of trust and open communication. It should serve as a magnet that draws in people of vastly differing political viewpoints and life experiences who are serious about addressing problems. Its methods also may serve as models for other institutions. **TNC** will participate actively in and promote the larger field of dialogue and collaborative decision-making. It will document its own experience and disseminate what it has learned in an effort to contribute to the field.

TNC also will look for new ways to apply its philosophy for addressing critical national issues. It may invite public officials to bring important issues to **TNC** or may bring its expertise directly to them.

At full capacity, **TNC** will have the following staff capabilities:

- *Dynamic leadership to build and guide the overall operations.* This includes the capacity to sustain and communicate the vision of the organization, recruit the governing Council, staff the Council's operations, establish strategic alliances, maintain a strong financial base, and oversee the key research, meeting planning, communications, networking, and policy implementation functions.
- *Research and Writing.* This would entail a strong ability, either through in-house staff or paid advisors, to thoroughly research and articulate issues under consideration by the Council and dialogue teams. Also required will be strong capabilities to record and synthesize the results of any **TNC** deliberations.
- *Networking and Recruitment.* This involves the capacity to reach out to myriad strategic partners who will be sources of information and people that fuel **TNC's** work. Time will be spent developing relationships with these individuals and organizations who will be helpful in every phase of **TNC** operations — from Council membership, to issue selection, to dialogue participation, to expansive implementation of solutions.
- *Facilitation and Meeting Planning.* A combination of staff and outside advisors will be needed to carefully design (and redesign as necessary) the dialogue process for each team assembled. This will require the services of highly skilled individuals with a great breadth of experience. Staff must also plan the Council and dialogue team meetings in a manner and in settings conducive to **TNC** processes.
- *Communications and Organizing.* **TNC** will need expansive and innovative capacity to communicate the results of its work to a variety of audiences. This will include traditional media relations work, as well as cutting edge electronic communications strategies. As a complement to communications, **TNC** will require strong ability to work with dialogue participants to organize widening circles of interested parties to participate in the dialogues and implement the solutions. **TNC** will need staff capacity, including skills of shuttle diplomacy, to keep implementation plans on track and to reconvene participants and allies as necessary.
- *Beyond these capabilities,* **TNC** will need the financial and human resources to flexibly design new strategies and approaches as necessary to fuel its work. If one dialogue team finds it necessary to hold field hearings or convene a conference, **TNC** would need the resources to support it. If part of the implementation strategy is to produce a first-class video presentation or buy newspaper advertisements throughout the country, **TNC** needs the ability to make it happen either on its own or through its collective partners. Given what is at stake in the dialogues convened by **TNC**, a key goal will be assuring resources that enable **TNC** to operate at a level consistent with its mission.

VIII.

Conclusion

VIII. Conclusion

The ambitious vision of **The National Commons** is a tribute to the groundbreaking work of other organizations and practitioners who have successfully developed and applied the art of dialogue and collaborative decision-making. They provide a foundation of knowledge and experience on which **TNC** and other institutions can build.

Yet, **TNC** will break new ground. To an unprecedented extent, **TNC** will bridge differences across sharply differing belief systems on issues of national importance. **TNC** will involve participants with the collective influence to effect meaningful change in our country, and potentially the world. In the long run, **TNC** hopes not only to find lasting solutions to daunting national problems, but also to transform the relationships of those involved and to model new ways for our society to address such problems.

At its core, **TNC** seeks to elevate the civility and effectiveness of public discourse. Its goal is not to make better people, create a forced politeness, or find a tepid middle ground. Instead, its goal is to put people in settings and structures best suited to promoting communication and collaboration that lead to creative and lasting answers to social problems. By building trust and partnership among participants and bringing underlying assumptions into the open, **TNC** will create an environment where individuals are more likely to express their common humanity through shared visions and actions.

TNC's approach will not work for all issues. It is intended to supplement, but not supplant, other public and private institutions that work for the common good. Further, **TNC** does not seek to muzzle advocacy or create a homogeneous society. Full and passionate expression of ideas and ideals serves the country well. **TNC** itself will be a passionate advocate for dialogue and civility in the arena of public discourse.

Rather, **TNC** hopes to influence the mindset of advocacy. Just as individuals understand that there are at least two sides to every story, **TNC** will encourage human and institutional relationships among traditional adversaries that are characterized by mutual understanding and respect. These new relationships can have salutary effects far beyond any specific issue at hand.

The National Commons will take a bold and creative approach to solving urgent national problems in a new millennium. As a worthy laboratory for our evolving democracy, it hopes to inspire widespread participation and support from partners who reflect the vast diversity and talent of this great nation.

**Attachment:
Proposed
Three-Year Budget**

Attachment

Proposed Three Year Budget — The National Commons

	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>
Personnel			
Staff	\$ 440,000	\$ 660,000	\$1,200,000
	(6 FTE)	(12 FTE)	(20 FTE)
Fringe @25%	\$ 110,000	\$ 165,000	\$ 300,000
Consultants	\$ 75,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 200,000
Subtotal, Personnel	\$ 625,000	\$ 975,000	\$1,700,000
Operations			
Dialogue sessions	\$ 50,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 250,000
Rent	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000
Furniture	\$ 30,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Phone system purchase	\$ 20,000		
Telephone/postage	\$ 25,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 35,000
Computers/printers	\$ 25,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
Computer servicing	\$ 18,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 18,000
Service agreements	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
Web site design	\$ 15,000		
Equipment rental/purchase	\$ 25,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
Travel (staff)	\$ 35,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 60,000
Printing/publications	\$ 35,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 125,000
Insurance	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
Office supplies	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
Subscriptions	\$ 10,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 20,000
Meetings/hearings/conferences	\$ 25,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 75,000
Council meetings/retreats	\$ 30,000	\$ 60,000	\$ 60,000
Recruitment	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000
Audit	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000
Legal fees	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000
Miscellaneous/contingency	\$ 25,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 50,000
Subtotal, Operations	\$ 688,000	\$ 858,000	\$1,063,000
TOTAL BUDGET	\$1,313,000	\$1,833,000	\$2,763,000
3 YEAR BUDGET	\$5,909,000		

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*Neera -
Can you help
to me about
this.*

May 11, 1999

Melanne Verveer
Chief of Staff to the First Lady
Room 100, OEOP
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Melanne:

I hope all is well with you.

I write to follow up on the voice mail message I left for you today concerning the new organization that I and others are launching—The National Commons (TNC). The purpose of TNC is to convene high-level dialogues leading to action on issues of national importance. We intend to build a “constituency for change” by engaging people of highly divergent perspectives and experience in intense dialogues over time to find integrative, common ground solutions to major national problems. Our initial area of focus will be “children, character, violence and society.”

Enclosed are (1) a prospectus that provides a complete description of The National Commons and who is involved and (2) a short, initial proposal on the children/youth violence issue. As the short paper indicates, we believe there is a need for neutral sponsorship of a skillfully facilitated, long-term national conversation on this issue. We are eager to coordinate with The White House not only to contribute to your current efforts, but also to design an effective long-term response. In addition to contacting you, I am reaching out to the Domestic Policy Council staff as well.

The National Commons has been developed by many talented people—Republicans and Democrats—over the past 15 months. I suspect you know several of our key advisors. Supported by several foundation grants, this has been my central work since leaving FRAC in January 1998. The goal is not only to have a major, positive impact on key national issues, but to model new ways of bringing together diverse people for common purpose.

I hope you will find this of interest and use. I would welcome a conversation with you, or anyone else you think appropriate, about this.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Fersh

Regards.

Enclosures

The National Commons

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May 11, 1999

National Dialogue on Children, Character, Violence and Society

Introduction

The random taking of human life represents the most fundamental breakdown that a civil society confronts. This loss of life is especially tragic when the primary victims are young people assaulted by peers acting out of frustration, confusion, or loss of direction. Although there is no consensus about how best to reduce this deadly violence, there is widespread belief that steps can and should be taken to address the issue. This violence, in fact, is part of a larger challenge the nation faces not only in promoting reverence for life, but also the psychological, emotional and spiritual health of many troubled children and youth.

Recent events in Littleton, Colorado have sparked nationwide soul-searching on these issues, including many calls for a "national conversation" and specific suggestions from Congressional leaders and the White House for a national conference to address them. These are positive starting points that need to be sustained by a long-term plan that leads to:

- (1) concrete policy changes;
- (2) specific ameliorative actions in communities throughout the country; and
- (3) development of ongoing capacity in communities nationwide where people of differing views can engage on these issues in a manner that fosters communication and collaboration, rather than polarization and division.

The National Commons (TNC), a new organization dedicated to forging collaborative, breakthrough solutions to critical national problems, proposes to convene a long-term, high level **National Dialogue on Children, Character, Violence and Society** designed to achieve the three central objectives described above. Prompted in part by sustained high rates of youth violence and recent sensational shooting incidents, TNC will engage individuals representing the key perspectives and constituencies on major issues involved in promoting positive values and behavior among our children and youth. The dialogue will focus not only on the need for actions to prevent violence, but in fostering the emotional, psychological and spiritual health of our children. Included in the dialogue will be respected political leaders, individuals from communities directly affected by violence, youth, parents, educators, community leaders, law enforcement officials, leaders from the entertainment and communications industries, experts in child development and criminology, religious leaders, key opinion leaders, journalists and others.

Fall 1999 Conference

TNC will launch this dialogue through an intensive three-day conference involving 50-100 people in the fall of 1999. Among the conference goals are: reaching consensus on the key problems to be addressed; identifying all the key perspectives and constituencies that need to be part of the long-term dialogue; and establishing a workplan for a sustained dialogue of two years or more.

Conference participants will prioritize the specific issues to be addressed, identifying those areas where a long-term dialogue is most needed and likely to yield results.

Among the topics under consideration will be:

- Pathways for children and youth to develop satisfying, nurturing relationships with peers, parents, educators and others;
- The key role of parents and families in fostering positive child development;
- The role of popular culture in glamorizing violent and anti-social behavior;
- The potential role of schools and other secular and religious institutions to provide constructive outlets for the inner concerns of children and youth;
- The availability of weapons that can effect rapid, deadly violence;
- The establishment of mechanisms to detect early warning signals of destructive behavior;
- The establishment of effective interventions to respond to warning signals.

In addition, the conference will begin the process of developing capacity in communities across the country where people of good will, but differing points of view, can constructively engage each other on their own local concerns. A key goal of the **National Dialogue on Children, Character, Violence and Society** will be building this local capacity to address these and other issues.

The National Commons Approach

The National Commons approach is explained fully in a prospectus published in March 1999. The core concept of TNC is to convene, over time, diverse parties critical to a particular issue and to emerge with a concrete plan for joint action that makes a significant difference in the lives of large numbers of people across the country. TNC seeks to bring together individuals of high knowledge, relevant backgrounds and experience, and substantial influence representing the broadest possible range of viewpoints on a particular issue.

TNC's board includes diverse, seasoned individuals in public policy, civil dialogue, diplomacy, spiritual development, business and other disciplines. They share a belief in the power of skillfully facilitated dialogue to find common ground answers that transcend and improve upon the opinions and solutions that any one party brings to a policy conversation. TNC's goal is to bring to the national policy level fresh, collaborative approaches to addressing critical issues that have been successfully employed at the community, state, and regional levels in the U.S. and in specific international disputes. TNC will employ facilitators who reflect the highest possible skill level and will bring together the experience and capacity of related existing organizations to contribute to the overall success of the **National Dialogue on Children, Character, Violence and Society**.

Key elements of the TNC approach include:

- Convening a dialogue over time (two years or more) that allows for reasoned, deliberate consideration of this urgent issue.
- Assembling all the players needed to create a “constituency for change”, including those (1) whose knowledge and experience are needed to fully understand the dimensions of and possible solutions to critical problems and (2) those who have enough influence over public policy and public opinion to mobilize changes to implement agreed upon changes.
- Framing issues in a manner that integrative solutions can emerge by taking a broad enough approach to address key interrelated issues, without creating such diffusion as to prevent identification of concrete ameliorative actions.
- Developing deep personal trust among participants so that communication can occur “person to person”, rather than “position to position.”
- Fostering conversation that not only clarifies the differences among participants but leads to a shared effort to find common ground solutions among them;
- Forging new alliances and partnerships among participants to that create a commitment to implement common ground solutions—either in policy or local practices.
- Establishing a mechanism for ongoing coordination and communication once the formal dialogue has concluded.

TNC also will use a variety of means to ensure that the collective wisdom of citizens is an integral part of the process. The ability of the national dialogue to effect change will be a direct function of its capacity to engage widespread participation by citizens and groups around the country. TNC will work with participants to engage ever widening circles of constituencies to contribute to the dialogue as it proceeds and participate in the implementation of any agreed-upon solutions. This will be achieved in many ways, including: involving organizations and individuals at the primary dialogue table who represent substantial constituencies; using electronic technologies to hold town meetings and otherwise communicate to as broad an audience as is practicable as the dialogue proceeds; keeping the public informed through the media; and utilizing key elected officials to bring attention to the work of the dialogue team. TNC also will work with existing organizations to promote complementary dialogues in communities around the country that can relate synergistically to the national dialogue and leave a capacity in place to address these and other issues over time.

Next Steps

The immediate next steps to create a **National Dialogue on Children, Character, Violence and Society** will center on organizing an intensive three-day conference for fall 1999. They include:

- Identifying a suitable site for convening the conference, including sites that might defray its costs.
- Identifying several leading institutions and eminent individuals to serve as primary conveners of the conference.
- Raising funds to cover the costs of planning, conducting and distilling the results of the conference (preliminary estimate, \$750,000).

- Identifying a talented, diverse roster of individuals who would participate in the conference.
- Designing the format of the conference and identifying appropriate facilitators;
- Conducting research on key issues and preparing materials;
- Forming partnerships with key existing organizations that can assist in organizing the conference and collaborate in follow up from it.

In addition to these steps relating to the conference, planning would begin for the long-term dialogue to follow. At a minimum, a menu of options would be prepared on how this dialogue could be organized, the frequency and location of meetings, and related matters. The planning process would include outreach to additional organizations who could serve as partners in this ambitious project. Fundraising efforts to support the long-term dialogue also would be initiated.

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