

America Reads

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 7, 1997

TO: Jim Dorskind, Director, Presidential Correspondence

FROM: Carol H. Rasco, Director, America Reads Challenge

RE: Request for Presidential Thank You Letter in Support of the America Reads Challenge

In our continuing effort to meet the goal outlined in the President's America Reads Challenge, an all-day meeting was convened by the White House Office of Public Liaison and the America Reads staff on July 28 at which representatives from nearly 150 business, civic, religious, education, family and youth-serving organizations were invited to share ideas about how to meet the goal and how to involve more diverse segments of society. Mrs. Clinton welcomed the attendees. An overview of the President's Call to Action for American Education was presented by White House staff after which the attendees met in working groups to discuss ways they are currently supporting literacy efforts, and how they intend to expand or initiate new commitments in support of the America Reads Challenge. At the end of the breakout sessions, each group's spokesperson presented their ideas to a panel of White House, Corporation for National Service and Department of Education staff.

In planning for this meeting, the National Economic Council, the Domestic Policy Council and the Office of Public Liaison asked that we establish the President's Coalition for the America Reads Challenge. Participants on July 28 were asked to "sign on". Those who did join have been told that their role will not only be to support literacy issues within their organizations and communities but to also communicate from the grassroots levels all the way up to corporate levels about the America Reads Challenge, encouraging their various constituent groups to become involved in the initiative. The Coalition will, therefore, continue to grow as more and more organizations "take the challenge."

My request to the Office of Presidential Correspondence is two-fold. First, I request a letter from the President to be sent to each individual organization joining the Coalition; this would be a letter that could also be used in the future for others signing on to the Challenge, extending thanks for their time and commitment, and encouraging them to continue their efforts to support literacy by working to expand the base of support for the America Reads Challenge. Second, I would like to develop a certificate for these and future Coalition members that would acknowledge them as members of the Coalition. I have attached the draft letter for your review and will forward a draft copy of the certificate under separate cover.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please call Laura Wood or Diane Jones at 401-8888 to discuss any questions you may have. I look forward to working with you on this matter.

cc: William White, OPL
Bob Shireman, NEC
Mike Cohen, DPC
Bill Kincaid, DPC

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
THE WHITE HOUSE

Dear {Personalized:}

As a fellow American concerned about the future of our nation and its success in the 21st century, I commend you for taking a leadership role in supporting the America Reads Challenge. By joining the President's Coalition for the America Reads Challenge, your willingness to commit your time and resources to ensure that every child reads well and independently by the end of third grade is a testimony to the importance you place on creating a literate society.

The knowledge that more than 40 percent of our nation's fourth grade students read at or below grade level concerns us all. Only through our joint efforts will we be able to move our nation forward to meet the complex and new demands that lie ahead in the next century. To assure our ability to compete in a global society, we must work together to make sure we leave no child behind. That is why your support of the America Reads Challenge is so important and critical to the success of our nation.

There are few greater gifts we can give than to open the world to a child through reading. I encourage you to remain diligent in your support of the America Reads Challenge, and encourage you to share your enthusiasm with others so they might join in helping us reach this clearly attainable goal. Together we can create a nation of readers that will ensure a prosperous and secure future for all Americans. Thank you for supporting the America Reads Challenge.

Sincerely,

William Jefferson Clinton
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