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Paul S. Sarbanes

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Dear Colleague:

Knowing of your own interest in reducing illiteracy in our Nation, I wanted to invite you to cosponsor legislation I introduced earlier this week to increase the maximum grant awards to libraries participating in the Library Literacy Grants program from $35,000 to $50,000.

With an estimated 17 million to 21 million adults in need of literacy training in our country today, we can ill-afford to turn our backs on programs which address this pressing problem. Since its inception, the library literacy grant program has proven successful in encouraging libraries to develop programs to reduce illiteracy with every State having at least one library which has participated since the grants were first funded in 1986.

I am deeply concerned that library literacy grants (title VI, Library Services and Construction Act) are terminated in the Administration's FY92 budget proposal. The bill I have introduced serves to emphasize the urgent need to continue Federal programs to fight illiteracy and to assist libraries in expanding and increasing such programs.

Libraries, which have always served as engines of learning and ladders of opportunity in our society, are uniquely situated to develop and offer literacy programs which can reach all segments of society. An increased grant award would provide a greater incentive for libraries to participate in the Library Literacy Grants program, and I urge you to join me in support of this legislation. I am enclosing for your review a copy of S. 420. If you would like to cosponsor, please contact either Julie Kehrli or Beverly McQuay of my staff at 224-4524.

With best regards,

Sincerely,

Paul S. Sarbanes
United States Senator

PSS/jkk

Enclosure
A BILL

To increase to $50,000 the maximum grant amount awarded pursuant to section 601 of the Library Services and Construction Act.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assem-
3 bled,

4 SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

5 The Congress finds that—

6 (1) 17,000,000 to 21,000,000 Americans are in
7 need of literacy training;

8 (2) illiteracy costs the United States

9 $224,000,000,000 annually in welfare payments,
crime, job incompetence, lost taxes, and remedial education;

(3) $237,000,000,000 in unrealized earnings is annually forfeited by individuals who lack basic learning skills;

(4) our Nation’s competitiveness in the world marketplace depends on our Nation’s ability to address the basic skills and literacy deficiencies of our existing and future workforce;

(5) a literate citizenry is critical to the successful continuation of a democratic society and enhances the freedom of each individual;

(6) library literacy grants have proven successful in encouraging libraries to develop programs to reduce illiteracy; and

(7) an increased library literacy grant award will allow libraries to play a greater role in helping address the profound problem of illiteracy in our Nation.

SEC. 2. AMENDMENT.

Subsection (e) of section 601 of the Library Services and Construction Act (20 U.S.C. 375(e)) is amended by striking “35,000” and inserting “50,000”.