White House Conference on Library and Information Services: Early Stages (1979-1985): Correspondence 01

Robert T. Stafford

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Ms. Barbara Cooper
Immediate Past Chair
WHCLIST
1700 E. Las Olas Blvd.
Suite 100
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301

Dear Ms. Cooper:

I am writing in response to your recent letter regarding the proposed White House Conference on Library and Information Services for 1989.

In my position as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities, I have always been a strong supporter of federal aid to libraries. Similarly, I was a participant in the 1979 White House Conference on Libraries. I have taken a position against the 1989 Conference for two specific reasons. First, the Congress has had an uphill battle for the past five years securing funding for the Library Services and Construction Act and for the library provisions in the Higher Education Act. The current Administration has proposed zero funding for all library programs during that time period. It seems incongruous to me to spend $15 million for a White House Conference when actual programs are constantly threatened with budget cuts.

A second concern is the high cost to state library programs to hold the mandatory state conferences which are included as part of this legislation. In Vermont alone, $100,000 was spent in 1979 to meet the requirements of the previous White House Conference.

In closing, I believe two amendments are necessary before the legislation authorizing a White House Conference on Library and Information Services should be enacted by the Congress. First, make the state-run conferences optional. Second, raise private sector funds to pay for the event.
I appreciate your taking the time to share your views with me about this legislation. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Sincerely yours,

Robert T. Stafford,
Chairman,
Subcommittee on Education,
Arts and Humanities

RTS:enpm