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White House Conference on Library and Information Services: Early Stages (1979-1985): Correspondence 02

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October 7, 1986

The Honorable Robert T. Stafford  
United States Senate  
133 Hart Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Stafford:

Your letter of September 30, 1986, about Senate Joint Resolution 112 and the proposed 1989 White House Conference on Library and Information Services was received with sincere appreciation on behalf of WHCLIST. We thank you warmly for your past and continuing strong support of federal library programs, which has been vital to their survival.

The need for amendments has been discussed since SJRes 112 and its companion HJRes 244 were introduced in April 1985. Our hope has been that the resolutions would be reported out in this session and amendments made, so that we would be in the more positive stance of working for appropriations in the next Congress. To that end, 42 Senators and 155 House Members have agreed to co-sponsor the legislation.

We call your personal attention to the enclosed report of last December 3, to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science from its Preliminary Conference Design Group (of which the Vermont State Librarian, Mrs. Patricia Klinck, was a valued member). This report deals with the structure and financing of the conference and makes recommendations to solve your serious concerns:

* "Some state library agency administrators have expressed the desire not to have state conferences. Others propose that they work with neighboring states in planning and conducting multi-state activities...Because the proposed legislation authorizing the second White House Conference calls for state conferences, we recommend that the legislation be amended or clarified to provide for appropriate substate and multi-state activities." (page 12)

* While we feel it would be unrealistic to expect a successful national conference without the incentive of federal funds for core staff and activities, we recognize the necessity to keep appropriations to rock bottom, and agreed with the Honorable William Ford of Michigan in last April's House hearing to a figure of $5 million. Thus, we recommend the second approach for financing the conference expressed in "Alternatives for Financing the Conference" (page 18). "A second approach would be to have the White House Conference process funded from a combination of federal, state, and private sources."
The Honorable Robert T. Stafford October 7, 1986

We thank you and the other Members of Congress heartily for supporting federal library programs despite the Administration position that they not be funded. However, we do see a major problem on the horizon for libraries in surviving the impact of loss of federal revenue sharing. As cities and counties look for money to replace this long-time resource for services (such as law enforcement) which are perceived as more "crucial" than libraries, substantial cuts are sure to be made in library budgets.

We in WHCLIST believe that the enclosed report gives a firm foundation to White House Conference legislation by detailing three suggested theme areas: "Library and information services for PRODUCTIVITY, for LITERACY and for DEMOCRACY (self-government)."

In my state the White House Conference can become a vehicle for mobilizing librarians, community leaders, elected officials and business leaders to provide more sophisticated and relevant library and information services in support of the workforce, business and industry (including the small business backbone of our state).

Sincere best wishes,

Barbara Cooper
Immediate Past Chair

BC/sl