



National Coalition For Literacy

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education ◦ Adult Literacy Media Alliance ◦ American Council on Education, GED Testing Service ◦ American Institute for Research ◦ American Library Association ◦ Center for Applied Linguistics ◦ Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee ◦ Commission on Adult Basic Education ◦ Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy ◦ Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy and the Goodling Institute for Research, Pennsylvania State University ◦ International Reading Association ◦ National Center for Family Literacy ◦ National Council of State Directors of Adult Education ◦ National Even Start Association ◦ ProLiteracy Worldwide ◦ Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. ◦ World Education

March 26, 2008

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U. S. Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Kennedy:

I am writing on behalf of the National Coalition for Literacy. The Coalition includes twenty-six national adult education and family literacy organizations interested in ensuring that all citizens have the literacy skills they need to lead full, productive lives.

It is our understanding that the President has recently forwarded to you the names of several individuals he is nominating for the Advisory Board of the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). As you are aware, NIFL was created to fill the need for additional resources for the adult education field. At that time, there were limited resources for adult education within the Department of Education even though the National Adult Literacy Survey (1992) found over 90 million adults had literacy needs. The most recent version of that survey, the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy, also found more than 90 million individuals with literacy deficits.

Although there is still a great need within the adult education field for the types of resources provided by NIFL, the current Advisory Board has expanded the work of NIFL to cover the literacy needs of all ages. Although we believe this work is important, there are numerous resources within the Department to address the needs of the K-12 system. Yet, as evidenced by a departmental decision to eliminate a research center for adult education, the focus on adult education is still limited within the Department of Education.

We applaud you for your many years of support for adult education and encourage you to ensure that those individuals appointed to the NIFL Advisory Board will keep the work of NIFL focused on adult education and family literacy. Adult education strives to provide the best possible services to program participants and NIFL helps us to succeed in this regard.

As a result, we would encourage you to hold off confirming any new members of the NIFL Board until a new administration is in place.

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The Coalition encourages you to only support the nominations of individuals with expertise and experience in adult education, such as John Comings, EdD, Harvard University, former director of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (the adult education research center once funded by the Institute of Education Sciences) and Eunice Askov, Distinguished Professor Emerita, Penn State University and former co-director of the Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or the NCL Policy Director, Lynn Selmsler at lcselmsr@cox.net or 571-217-1189.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sherrie Claiborne".

Sherrie Claiborne
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