PUBLIC LAW 101-50—JUNE 30, 1989 103 STAT. 139

Public Law 101-50
101st Congress

Joint Resolution

Designating July 2, 1989, as "National Literacy Day".

Whereas literacy is a necessary tool for survival in our society;
Whereas thirty-five million Americans today read at a level which is
less than necessary for full survival needs;
Whereas there are twenty-seven million adults in the United States
who cannot read, whose resources are left untapped, and who are
unable to offer their full contribution to society;
Whereas illiteracy is growing rapidly, as two million three-hundred
thousand persons, including one million two-hundred thousand
legal and illegal immigrants, one million high school dropouts,
and one hundred thousand refugees, are added to the pool of
illiterates annually;
Whereas the annual cost of illiteracy to the United States in terms
of welfare expenditures, crime, prison expenses, lost revenues, and
industrial and military accidents has been estimated at
$225,000,000,000;
Whereas the competitiveness of the United States is eroded by the
presence in the workplace of millions of Americans who are
functionally or technologically illiterate;
Whereas there is a direct correlation between the number of illit­
erate adults unable to perform at the standard necessary for
available employment and the money allocated to child welfare
and unemployment compensation;
Whereas the percentage of illiterates in proportion to population
size is higher for blacks and Hispanics, resulting in increased
economic and social discrimination against these minorities;
Whereas the prison population represents the single highest con­
centration of adult illiteracy;
Whereas one million children in the United States between the ages
of twelve and seventeen cannot read above a third grade level, 13
per centum of all seventeen-year-olds are functionally illiterate,
and 15 per centum of graduates of urban high schools read at less
than a sixth grade level;
Whereas 85 per centum of the juveniles who appear in criminal
court are functionally illiterate;
Whereas the 47 per centum illiteracy rate among black youths is
expected to increase to 50 per centum by 1990;
Whereas one-half of all heads of households cannot read past the
eighth grade level and one-third of all mothers on welfare are
functionally illiterate;
Whereas the cycle of illiteracy continues because the children of
illiterate parents are often illiterate themselves because of the
lack of support they receive from their home environment;
Whereas Federal, State, municipal, and private literacy programs
have only been able to reach 5 per centum of the total illiterate
population;

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Whereas it is vital to call attention to the problem of illiteracy, to understand the severity of the problem and its detrimental effects on our society, and to reach those who are illiterate and unaware of the free services and help available to them; and

Whereas it is also necessary to recognize and thank the thousands of volunteers who are working to promote literacy and provide support to the millions of illiterates in need of assistance: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That July 2, 1989, is designated as "National Literacy Day", and the President is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe such day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

Approved June 30, 1989.