December 12, 2003

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

We write to urge you to dramatically increase the federal investment in American secondary schools in your Fiscal Year 2005 budget proposal. Principals, assistant principals, and school leaders across the nation thank you for the important emphasis you have placed on ensuring that young children learn to read and write early in their academic careers. Early Reading First and Reading First are welcome new policies that have already generated positive results in grades K-3, providing $1 billion in new resources to elementary schools. The resources provided through these initiatives have enabled schools to invest in research-based reading curriculum and high quality teacher professional development.

A similar investment is needed for secondary schools. Although the intent of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is to help all students graduate prepared for successful postsecondary careers, in reality federal dollars rarely stretch beyond the 6th grade. As little as 5% of the funds to support Title I of the NCLB are directed to low-income, low-performing high schools. Serving the youngest first makes sense. Not serving older students has tragic consequences that can and should be addressed.

Failure to complete high school has lifelong consequences for young people and for society. We know that of the 20 million students enrolled in middle level and high school, close to 6 million students read well below grade level—and we know that a lack of literacy skills is why the majority of young people leave school. A similar reading investment in middle and high schools is urgently needed.

The Manhattan Institute reports drop out rates in urban schools as high as 50 percent. As many as 25% of 9th graders enter high school unable to read well enough for the course work and are likely to be gone by graduation. A recent GAO study reports that among the devastating consequences of not completing high school are greater reliance on welfare and a greater likelihood of incarceration. As educators, we know what it takes to halt this costly downward trend. As a nation, we must garner the public will to get the job done. To succeed on both counts, we need your leadership and your support.
The National Association of Secondary School Principals and its 51 state affiliates urge your support for a significant new federal initiative, extending the focus and resources of NCLB beyond the elementary grades, to truly achieve your vision of an education system where all students succeed. In return, we pledge our commitment to create safe and high performing learning environments, where all students have the opportunity to achieve to the best of their ability. Thank you.

Sincerely,

The National Association of Secondary School Principals

Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools
Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals
Arizona School Administrators
Arkansas Association of Secondary School Principals
Association of California School Administrators
Colorado Association of School Executives
Connecticut Association of Schools, Inc.
Delaware Association of School Administrators
District of Columbia Association of Secondary School Principals
Florida Association of Secondary School Principals
Affiliated Georgia School Leaders
Hawaii Association of Secondary School Administrators
Idaho Association of Secondary School Principals
Illinois Principals Association
Indiana Association of School Principals
School Administrators of Iowa
Kansas Association of Secondary School Principals
Kentucky Association of Secondary School Principals
Louisiana Association of Principals
Maine Principals’ Association
Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals
Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators’ Association
Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals
Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals
Mississippi Association of Secondary School Principals
Missouri Association of Secondary School Principals
Montana Association of Secondary School Principals
Nebraska Council of School Administrators
Secondary School Principals Association of Nevada
New Hampshire Association of School Principals
New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association
New Mexico Association of Secondary School Principals
School Administrators Association of New York
North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals Association
North Dakota Association of Secondary School Principals
Ohio Association of Secondary School Principals
Oklahoma Association of Secondary School Principals

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Confederation of Oregon School Administrators
Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals
Rhode Island Association of School Principals
South Carolina Association of School Administrators
School Administrators of South Dakota
Tennessee Association of Secondary School Principals
Texas Association of Secondary School Principals
Utah Association of Secondary School Principals
Vermont Principals’ Association
Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals
Association of Washington School Principals
West Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals
Association of Wisconsin School Administrators
Wyoming Association of Secondary School Principals

c: The Honorable Ted Stevens, President Pro Tempore
The Honorable Bill Frist, Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Majority Whip
The Honorable Tom Daschle, Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable Harry Reid, Senate Minority Whip
The Honorable Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Tom DeLay, House Majority Leader
The Honorable Roy Blunt, House Majority Whip
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, House Minority Leader
The Honorable Steny Hoyer, House Minority Whip
The Honorable Arlen Specter, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman
The Honorable Ralph Regula, House Appropriations Committee Chairman
The Honorable Judd Gregg, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chairman
The Honorable John Boehner, House Education and Workforce Committee Chairman
The Honorable Rod Paige, Secretary of Education
The Honorable Susan Sclafani, Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education
The Honorable Joshua Bolten, Director of the Office of Management and Budget
The Honorable Kathy Stack, Branch Chief of Education
The Honorable Margaret Spellings, Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy
The Honorable Ronald Tomalis, Chief of Staff, U.S. Department of Education

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