Please take care of my country, our country, wisely. I hope you read this letter and take it into consideration. Words can be soothing to most, but we need action.

Let me explain it to you. So Mr. President, it is up to you to direct the youth of our country into a more promising future.

Remember. DON'T PANIC! It is going to be your job to help us.

I hope you can answer my questions. Remember those of us whose futures are in your hands.

So grab hold and climb up. So Mr. President, it is up to you to direct the youth of our country into a more promising future.

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NATIONAL COMMISSION ON WRITING FOR AMERICA’S FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, AND COLLEGES

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Preface

For more than six years, the College Board’s National Commission on Writing has been working with K-12 education, higher education and policymakers to improve writing in the United States. Our work is based on a few simple premises: Writing is central to education, writing is central to the workplace and economic competitiveness, writing is central to civic engagement, and writing is central to personal expression. Given the rapid advances in technology and use of the Internet, writing is likely to become even more important in the future.

This year’s agenda to advance writing differs from those we have had in the past, and it is perhaps our most exciting one yet. Instead of making the case through secondary means, explaining the importance of writing, we decided to show the power of writing through writing itself. What better way to make our point than to give real illustrations of what writing can accomplish?

And so to this end, in 2009, we are celebrating the power of student voices. Our first publication, this one, contains letters from middle and high school students to the newly elected president of the United States. Our follow-up publications will present the voices of students on how writing influences their lives and will also present students’ voices on the complex and important issues of immigration and second-language learning.

By reading the letters in this compelling volume, we get a real sense of what writing can mean to both the writer and the reader. If you are as affected as we are, we will have made the best possible case for the importance of writing.

Before closing, I would like to thank Google and the National Writing Project for the Letters to the Next President project, the many student writers from whom these letters have been selected, and the teachers who helped guide these students.

Gaston Caperton
President, The College Board

Project Description

Letters to the Next President: Writing Our Future is an online writing and publishing project for students, ages 13-18, co-sponsored by Google and the National Writing Project. They invited young people to write about the issues and concerns that they feel are central to their future, issues they would hope our next president would act on. Topics were chosen by the students themselves to reflect their specific personal, regional and age-related interests. Teachers and mentors guided students through the process of writing a persuasive letter or essay to the presidential candidates using Google Docs. Over 6,600 letters were received from 217 schools throughout the nation on a wide variety of issues, including abortion, college, college cost, economy, education, energy, environment, gas prices, gay marriage, gay rights, global warming, gun policy, health care, immigration, Iraq, jobs, money, pollution, poverty, schools, taxes and war. The site is: www.letters2president.org.
Please take care of my country, our country, wisely.

Run Forest, Run!
by Sirjaut K., Hartland, Wis.

Although I am far from the age of voting, I avidly watch coverage of the latest news throughout the country. Many of the problems, such as the dismal economy, have not really hit home to me yet. I understand the concepts of the troubles, but today I wanted to write about a problem that I care about, one that I see happening every day.

Nine years ago, I moved to a small town of 7,000, into an old house surrounded by a densely wooded area. My family moved here in order to get away from a big city. Little by little, the trees would vanish and more houses would pop up. My original kindergarten class of 14 steadily increased to a plentiful 48. The town’s population grew to 8,000. Every day, while driving to extracurricular activities, I saw signs for 52-acre farms for sale, and I saw more wooded areas turn into more neighborhoods. As I stared out the window, watching the hungry deer scrounging around for the last leaves left on the trees, I thought to myself, “If animals are losing their homes in this small community, what happens to the forests outside of my town, outside of the state?”

Therefore, I set to work and started researching. For the past 10 years, forest numbers have dropped drastically due to development. Animals are losing their homes and food sources, and rare wildlife is becoming extinct. In the past 20 years, forest numbers have dropped from a 4-acre forestland area per capita, which is alarming in the first place, to a shocking number of less than one. I understand this population is growing drastically, but this does not excuse the easy job of planting a tree to contribute to the rebuilding of our forests.

Development and construction are not the only causes of forest depletion, but forest fires are also a great contributor. To this exact date, in 2008 alone, there have been 73,352 forest fires and 5,034,070 acres have been damaged. This has happened in just the past year. I am not saying that all forest fires can be prevented, but in the past few years, many could have been. Negligence of camping fires can cause these, but the most common cause is dry wood. Because of the severe droughts occurring lately, certain weather conditions can trigger a spark, which leads to a fire. This all leads to the lack of homes for wildlife, although the true cause is global warming. However, global warming is another issue, and a separate letter.

So it is up to you, Mr. President. Are you willing to sacrifice the homes of precious wildlife, of our nation’s beloved bird, the bald eagle? Will there be a lush, wildlife-filled, forest-filled America left for generations to come? Or will the next America be a barren, overpopulated, polluted wasteland? This country is in your hands, Mr. President. Please take care of my country, our country, wisely.
Poverty Is Everyone’s Problem
by Natalie, Shelburne, Vt.

I, and many other people, believe that we have let all of this go way too far. We need to go to desperate measures to help the numerous humans who are suffering from poverty. We should not only help the people living in the U.S., but also people all over the world. This is a very serious matter involving millions of people’s lives that are currently at risk.

I know that no one deserves to live in the horrible conditions in which hundreds of millions of innocent humans are forced to live. Extreme poverty is no way to live your life, and those people need our help to make it right. The governments need to better fund programs and shelters that help with this rather large problem. We need to publicize this, and make it known so more people are educated about it. Then they will be more likely to help with it. Things aren’t going to be made better on their own, so we have to be proactive and take action. Some people might say that it’s not our problem, so they aren’t going to do anything about it. Well, we have to make it our problem. Our duty is to help the less privileged people of our Earth.

In some places, poverty is improving slowly with help. But in others, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, poverty is worsening. In that region, the poverty level rose from 41 percent in 1981 to 46 percent in 2001. There are also more places in the same situation, like the Caribbean, which is closer to the USA. Once we get our own poverty under control I think we should help the Caribbean with their poverty, because they are in need of outside assistance. Also, this would set an example for other countries with the ability to help areas in need.

In the end we need to take charge and control of this difficult situation. Together we can fix this monster of an issue, but only together. This problem may take a while to fix, but with patience and persistence I believe we can.

Organ Donors: “Superheroes Saving Lives”
by Surabhi P., Fishers, Ind.

I am writing to inform the government of the lack of organ donors in the U.S. and how the number of organ donors can increase if the U.S. government helped to promote the significance of becoming a donor. The government would be able to save millions of people and eliminate the medical crisis that organ donation is gradually inclining to become, simply by encouraging people to become organ donors. Unfortunately, the campaign efforts of the government and organ transplant centers and organizations have not been able to open the eyes of many people, since the numbers of patients that need an organ are increasing every minute. The efforts of the government are of key importance in explaining to the American people to become organ donors because our government helps to show its people the right paths to take in most aspects of their lives, which includes the choice of becoming an organ donor. ...
African Massacre
by Claire T., Dubuque, Iowa

In case you didn’t know, last year there were over 5.7 million people infected with HIV in South Africa and approximately 1,000 are dying every day. Africa is currently going through one of the worst AIDS epidemics the world has ever seen. The big question is whether or not the government has helped enough. If you were to ask me, I would say we haven’t done nearly enough. Almost one in five adults are infected with HIV. This means that if they would ever want to have children, then their children would be born infected. There is a treatment people can take to maintain their health, but so many people are living in poverty it’s hard to get a hold of this drug.

Nearly all infected people of Africa will die by 2010 if we do not step up and do something. The United States is known as one of the most powerful countries in the world, which means we have the power to stop all of this. We need to educate our citizens and together fight for the young women and children of Africa.

But the AIDS epidemic is only one of the few struggles African people have to deal with every day. Another issue is the genocide that is going on. The genocide is one of the main reasons AIDS is so widespread. So in order to get rid of AIDS forever we need to intervene and stop the violence.

The region of Darfur in the country of Sudan is home to many racially mixed tribes. There is ongoing genocide throughout the region of Darfur. The genocide in Darfur has claimed 400,000 lives and displaced over 2,500,000 people. More than one hundred people continue to die each day; five thousand die every month. The leaders of this genocide are the Janjaweed, a government-supported militia group. The Janjaweed come into civilians’ towns and stun them for life. Forms of torture they use are rape, displacement, starvation, and mass murder. America needs to sit down with the leaders of these groups and we need to make a stand, for the future of Africa lies in international countries’ hands. It all depends on how much we care. Our government has done some things to help Africa, but not as much as they need. African civilians have no form of protection against these violent people other than themselves.

…Would you really sit back and watch hundreds of the children you know and love die every day because you didn’t have the will to even try and save them? If you could look into the eyes of these children, I know you wouldn’t rest until this violence is stopped.
We Cannot Do It Without You
by Sarah W., Cupertino, Calif.

Mr. President,

I honestly do not believe you are in any way uneducated about the problems facing our country. In fact, I am sure you are aware of the issues in far more depth than I. I cannot provide you with any more statistical information, nor can I provide insight on ways to create the economic stability our country so needs, but I do believe that I can provide you with the voice of one who is directly experiencing the effects of our economy in respect to the skyrocketing values of health insurance.

Every month I have to have an MRI to watch for the return of a malignant brain tumor I successfully had removed twice before. I drive up to Lucille Packard Children’s Hospital at Stanford University in California and the moment we step inside the door the feelings of desperation and anxiety are almost tangible. I hear the low voices of parents discussing, arguing, and praying for some way to pay for their child’s health care. The horrifying reality is, if they cannot afford it, which is too often the case, they are turned away and forced to watch their children suffer and sometimes slowly die before their eyes. How can we ask these parents to do this?

I myself have overheard the worries of my own family regarding how to pay for the medical exams I need so frequently. Because of how expensive my visits are, my parents are giving up their passions, stressing over finding new jobs, mentally struggling for stability, just to be able to pay for me. My brother is in college, I am a junior in high school, and the daunting reality of paying for our education is also upon them. If I could do anything to help them, if I could just take away the burden of all that my health needs cost them, I would. To my overwhelming displeasure, I cannot. And so Mr. President, I need you. This country needs you.

As I walk through those halls, I am able to put the faces to the issue. Their tears reflect nothing but hopelessness. Please, Mr. President, something needs to change. The failing economy has left your citizens struggling to provide for their families, to provide health care to those they love, to send their children to college. You must save this economy, or be left with the cries and desperation of these people on your hands.

Congratulations on Becoming the Leader of the Great United States!

by Adam, Tulsa, Okla.

I wish you the best of luck in your presidency. I hope you read this letter and take it into consideration. Do the country some good. Remember. DON’T PANIC! ...
13-year-old speaks out
by Shadowmox, Southgate, Calif.

Dear Mr. President,

... Now, only if you’ve been living under a rock all your life would you not know about the economic crisis. Let me explain it to you, in a 13-year-old regular eighth-grader’s point of view. The economy effects us all, not just the citizens of this country, not just the people with jobs, not just the people who work in the government, but EVERYONE. I find this rather obvious, but I thought I’d explain it anyway. Someone has to fix this economic crisis, and it’s not going to be me, because there’s only so much I can do. It’s not going to be my parents, because there’s only so much they can do. In fact, no one in my entire family can do anything about it. All they can do about it is to learn to live with it, which is nearly impossible, or they can vote for a person who will do something about this. And if you haven’t already done something about this, then I suggest you stop reading this right now and go do something about it. But if you want to keep reading, then be my guest. I really don’t know what I would do about the economy if I were you, but then again I’m only thirteen and politics really aren’t my best subject, so I’ll just leave that part to you. Hopefully, you can make the changes we need in this country.

My parents are immigrants (don’t worry they aren’t illegal immigrants), so immigration is a big issue that I am concerned about. My parents didn’t always have the documents they needed to stay in this country, so I know how other people with parents like mine feel. I can’t imagine how it must be living every day with the worry that your parents are going to be deported if caught and you are going to stay all alone, homeless and broke in the streets. That would make it a really tough childhood. But if illegal immigrants came into this country with children, they would use that as an excuse and, if it were permitted, then illegal immigrants would only have children to stay in the country. I really don’t see the point in keeping people out of this country. Is it too crowded? When you walk on the sidewalk, do you have to push people out of the way just to walk? In my experience, this is not a problem.

People come to this country for great opportunities; in fact, they are so desperate that they jump over borders and risk getting deported, just to look for jobs that aren’t even guaranteed due to today’s economy. So I suggest you do something about both the economy AND the immigration problem in this country. ...
Let's Go Back to the Moon
by Steven R., Longmont, Colo.

...To space, I say! There, colonies will be built, on the moon and elsewhere, and whole asteroids can be mined for the natural resources we humans crave. There, we can study new sights and sounds, new phenomena not yet explained, and perhaps even new life. And, of course, these new discoveries will benefit our home planet. New energy sources will power our cities without pollution, and the vast expansion of habitable space will make conflict unnecessary and outdated. Another great leap it will be! ...
Sell Your Clothes and Keep Your Thoughts
by Whitney R., Aurora, Neb.

... It took me quite awhile to narrow down what I wanted to talk about in this letter, but the biggest point that I would like to get off my chest is about this consumer-driven culture. Everything is about me, me, me. No one thinks to give anything to anyone else; you couldn't find generosity unless you searched high and low to find it. Everyone, including myself, seems to be always focused on themselves and what they can get for themselves.

We need to do as John F. Kennedy said, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” The attention needs to be taken off of me and what I want, and put on what can I do for others.

We need to stop thinking of ourselves as consumers, and more as citizens of this great country. We don’t exist just to buy more and more without even thinking. Not only is consumerism teaching faulty character, it is also destroying and polluting the environment. As consumers, we consume more and more, always needing things beyond the basics. As citizens, we could take pride in this country, and give what we have to people who need it more than we do. As citizens, we should think about what we can do to keep this country going and prospering. As citizens, we would be doing far more with our lives than wasting them away on pleasures and pastimes that don’t matter in the long run. We would be farsighted, and see what we need to do to prepare for the future.

We, as a culture, will never be satisfied with what we have, unless someone stands up and sets the record straight. Most people don’t even realize the way they are acting, or what their priorities are unless someone wakes them up to smell the roses. As Eric Hoffer once said, “You can never get enough of what you don’t need to make you happy.” If people would just realize that everything that they see in the stores or on TV isn’t always a necessity, this issue would no longer be an issue. Mad Magazine put it this way, humorously yes, but there is still a lot of truth behind it. “The only reason a great many American families don’t own an elephant is that they have never been offered an elephant for a dollar down and easy weekly payments.” The temptations and opportunities for obtaining more and more possessions are out there, and we as Americans just need to learn how to resist and desist. The skill of learning how to say “no” is a lost art that needs to be regained. ...

It’s time to do as Henry David Thoreau said, “Do not trouble yourself much to get new things, whether clothes or friends. ... Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts.”
How Can We Help Education in the USA?
by Casey W., Boone Grove, Ind.

Dear Mr. President:

I would like to ask some questions that really concern me. One issue is education from preschool to college. Another issue that I’m concerned with is the working poor. I hope you can answer my questions.

I would like to know why 12 states have no state-funded early education. Studies show that early childhood education increases achievement test scores, and less kids being held back a grade, or being put in special education. It also decreases crime and increases high school graduation.

I would also like to know how you are going to keep kids from being high school dropouts. Almost one-third of high school students don’t graduate on time. One study shows some of the top reasons for dropping out are: classes weren’t interesting, they missed too many days, or they had family issues.

Another question that I have about education is how you are going to stop the cost of college tuition from becoming too high. The cost of college tuition for a four-year college can be $10,000-$30,000 per year without housing and other expenses. Many other countries provide college at little or no cost. Why can’t we? I’m concerned that scholarships won’t be available for college. Will people have to spend the rest of their lives paying back a student loan, if it’s available? Will they have to get a job in college to pay for it? Do you have a plan to make college tuition less expensive?

What about the working poor? Since 1968, minimum wage has dropped 40 percent. If it would have kept up with inflation, it would be $8.46 an hour. If a person earns less than $8.70 an hour, in a year, he earns less than the federal poverty level for a family of four. How are they going to afford housing, food and health care? How are they going to be able to send their kids to college?

Helping Hands
by jenny_baby, Arlington, Texas

I hope that you will really work on helping out those people that may work in the sun all day, carrying overweight materials, using their hands for rough purposes. It doesn’t seem like any kind of help has been sent around for them. These people wake up every morning not very happy to go to their job because it is not an easy job. They get up thinking of all the hours they have to work to make sufficient money to pay bills and simply maintain their families. They give up too much of their time to their job just to make enough money to live off of. I say this because of my own experience. My dad wakes up really early each morning to go to work as a construction worker to make money for us to live a good life every day. I don’t want to say I am rich, but I do know my dad has worked very hard for everything we have now, and he had long hours of work where at times I couldn’t even see him because of all the work he had. I just hope that the president understands how hard it is to work for what you have and not just have inherited it all. Hopefully, something will be done.
The Cure for Racism
by Angelo E., Snow Hill, Md.

Dear Mr. President,

The United States of America was founded on the belief of equality. “All men are created equal,” but does that include all African American men and all Hispanic American men, or just all white men?

Anthony Jackson is an African American teacher at Jena High School, the home of the infamous Jena Six case. Wade Goodwyn, in reporting on the event stated that Mr. Jackson said, “White students can do things and receive a slap on the hand;’ but authorities ‘want to throw the book at blacks,’ he adds.” Whether Mr. Jackson’s observation can be proven or not doesn’t matter, this man feels the way he feels. If Mr. Jackson feels this inequality, there are others that are bound to feel it too. This sense of superiority/inferiority has seriously crippled Americans’ ability to collaborate throughout history. Some may think that every American has an equal opportunity to achieve whatever they want to, which may be true, but the opportunity only exists for those who will take advantage of it, and with so many believing things like Mr. Jackson does, they give up before they get started. People begin to hate each other for no reason at all. Nothing is more fatal than a country divided. There is no plague, no scourge as destructive as racial division, an unspoken civil war. Racism is the real weapon of mass destruction for the United States of America. No weapon has the ability to cause such animosity against our neighbors except this abstract concept, existing only because we allow it to. Nationalism and unity are key to a successful and powerful nation. ...

We Americans need to be able to speak our minds. We need to learn how to communicate with other people better. In order to resolve problems people have with one another, we need to be able to sit down and talk these problems out. In this country today, we are unable to do that. People become offended too fast and are too quick to sue. If one person could talk out their feelings, and another could listen, then Americans could reach a new level of understanding. If this could be accomplished, our nation would be unfathomably more powerful. Surely there is someone that can come up with an idea. ...

I’d Rather Not Be Charbroiled, Thanks!
by Lauren P., Bellingham, Wash.

Dear Mr. President,

Every time someone drives their car, burns coal or oil, leaves their lights on, idles their car for more than 30 seconds, they are slowly helping to char the earth and all life on it. The latest EPA greenhouse gas inventory shows that, in 2005, the U.S. emitted over 7.2 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases. That was also the warmest year on record, according to NASA and NOAA data, since 1850. Coincidence? I think not. Sea levels are rising, glaciers are melting, animals and plants are becoming endangered, weather is becoming more intense, ice is freezing later and thawing earlier; and here you are, in the middle: the president of the United States of America — which is currently digging itself into a pretty big hole, with seemingly no way out. But I’ve got a ladder for you: renewable alternative green energy. So grab hold and climb up. ...
Don’t Forget the People.
by Brittany L., Cottondale, Ala.

... I’m here to serve as a reminder. Even as we work through the problems in our economy and the flaws in our education system, I ask that you remember what makes the United States of America what it is — its citizens and their rights as humans. Civil rights and women’s rights must not be forgotten. I ask that you consider all that still needs to be done in order to make the United States a land of true equality. ...

Words to Live By
by Shelby H., Sonora, Calif.

Dear Mr. President,

When I was younger, I used to visit my grandparents on weekends. The three of us would go pick up a pizza, come home, eat, and then my grandma and I would bake THE BEST chocolate chip cookies. As the day wound down and our worries decreased considerably, both my grandpa and I would sit down in front of the TV with a glass of milk and a handful of cookies, still warm from the oven, and watch the “The Cowboys.” “The Cowboys” is a western from 1972 starring John Wayne. I grew up idolizing “The Duke,” and every fond childhood memory seems to, one way or another, involve my all-time hero. His words have affected me greatly and made such a difference in the way I approach people and the choices I make.

I thought you might enjoy these quotes and that you might think of each during your time in office:

“Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway.”
“Tomorrow hopes we have learned something from yesterday.”
“A man’s got to do what a man’s got to do.”
“Never say sorry — it’s a sign of weakness.”
“Life is tough, but it’s tougher when you’re stupid.”
“A man ought to do what he thinks is right.”

These sayings have helped me through each and every day of my life. I hope that they help you as much as they help me.

“Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway.”
Be Prepared
by Carolyn W., Opelika, Ala.

... You, my friend, are now graced by God with the opportunity to take charge and lead this beautiful country into a bright renewal. Remember those of us whose futures are in your hands. The failing economy and lack of education are now upon your shoulders. It is up to you to prove you have deserved this privilege — make me believe!

Reforming the War on Terror
by MB, Boulder, Colo.

Mr. President,

I write to you as a youth deeply concerned about the way America is fighting the “War on Terror.” To truly be effective in our efforts to eliminate terrorism we must reform our tactics. In recent years there has been too much emphasis on American goals and motives, and not enough thought has been put into the effect of our actions on the people of the regions we have invaded. The media constantly covers the number of American lives lost in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, but have we stopped to consider the Iraqi lives, the Afghanis, the Pakistanis? Are their lives less valuable than Americans? It is estimated that the number of Iraqi civilian deaths is between 88,656 and 96,766 (iraqbodycount.org). American deaths: 4,124 (globalsecurity.org). We invaded Iraq under the false pretext that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and was supporting terrorist organizations. As the war has gone on it has become more and more clear that the driving force behind our invasion was our desire to control Iraqi oil and to develop a military base in a sea of anti-Americanism. This is absurd. This is not fighting a war on terror, it is amplifying the issue. We are giving the rest of the world justification for their hatred toward America.

I agree that terrorist networks must be eradicated. However, we must first establish that a country is, in fact, supporting terrorists. Only then do we have any right to violate that nation’s sovereignty, and even then we must do so for the right reasons. ...

Mr. President, we cannot continue to make enemies of our allies by destroying their homes and villages, killing their loved ones, and leaving the devastated masses to clean up the messes we create. Our motives must change; we must fight for the lives of the oppressed and underprivileged. We must work for their progress and their freedom from war and terror, not for our own selfish political desires, or to gain puppet states and allies. We cannot enter this fight alone, nor can we win by force. Only through global efforts can we hope to see peace. ...
Immigration Makes America Strong
by Litzahaya M., Marysville, Wash.

Dear Mr. President,

I write to you today with cookies on my mind — peanut butter cup, chocolate chip, peanut butter cookies. These delicious cookies are America. Just like our magnificent country, these cookies are made of many unique ingredients coming together to make something special. The ingredients that combine to make America special are our people of different cultures and backgrounds. But now this “American cookie” is beginning to crumble as some of our leaders restrict our borders and crack down on immigration and turn a shoulder to farm workers’ rights.

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free.” These words have warmly greeted immigrants to our country for many years. Proudly displayed at the Statue of Liberty, these words send a message of hope to everyone who seeks a better way of life. However, do our leaders truly embrace these words any more? A few hundred miles southwest of the Statue of Liberty stretches a barrier — a steel, concrete, barbwire serpent of a wall — to people’s dreams who by birth aren’t lucky enough to be United States citizens. Some people believe this wall should be there. But this wall can stop dreams from coming true. Supporters of the wall say that illegal immigrants commit a lot of crime. Therefore, by securing our borders with a longer wall and more Border Patrol, they feel that less people will come to America and crime will go down. This approach, however, has backfired as now more than ever people stream across the border, most of whom come simply in search of the American dream. The Statue of Liberty holds a flaming torch that lights the way to freedom and welcomes immigrants to America. Our differences can’t stand between us. The world is one team — let us unite and share our freedom with everyone. What are you going to do, Mr. President, to ensure the flame doesn’t burn out because of stricter immigration laws?

The United States is a beautiful mixture of different people from different places. Almost everyone has a story about how they, too, or someone from their family tree, are immigrants. Maybe they’re not the first generation of Americans, but possibly the second or third. But because of immigrants, America exists. The United States doesn’t just unite the 50 states, but the people from all over the world. Immigrants with hope in their hearts are crossing the borders to make their American dream come true — enjoying our side of America. Open your eyes and allow more immigrants to join our team. We will be stronger than ever before and become once again the family of the world. ...

Masters vs. Morals
by Nick P., Mount Vernon, Mo.

... My third grade teacher was my hero. She was able to get all of us excited about school because it was reading day, or we were going to start a new project; not because in two hours and twenty-eight minutes we would be pelting tiny balls of death at each other’s heads, gratified by the “phink” sound rubber makes when in contact with a face. I carried this new fire with me all year. ...
Skating in Gym Class
by Barend U., St. Joseph, Mo.

I know skating in gym class may not be an urgent issue with the stock markets falling and the war in Iraq, but please consider these suggestions to the curriculum of physical education in American schools. Imagine, if skateboarding were offered in gym class, there would be so many new skills students could learn, like agility, stamina, and balance. I think that skateboarding is a great sport and needs to be included in the physical education curriculum. If you were to learn how to skate, you would have to push a lot, which mimics running, and also if you run a lot, you have more stamina and, of course, you need balance just to ride a skateboard. According to Skateboard America, skateboarding is the sixth ranked sport in popularity. Kids like it because they think it looks cool, not all kids have the time to be on a team, or just because it feels great to ride. So why isn't it offered in gym class? The goal of gym class is to teach adolescents a healthy lifestyle by offering them many sports to try and skating falls under that list perfectly. By giving students a chance to skate, it may show them a new activity to enjoy and stay healthy by doing it. There are over 300 skate parks in America, and it would be easy for schools and students to access them. If a school does not have a skate park nearby, any paved parking lot would work just as well.

Skating has taught me to be brave and has given me more energy and strength, has taught me to be much more stable than before, has kept me healthy, and I have had a lot of fun doing it. … This isn't an urgent measure.

The Necessities
by A., Tupelo, Miss.

Dear Mr. Future President,

When people aren't honest with me, I sometimes get confused and frustrated. So I'm going to start right now with being honest with you. Until about five weeks ago when assigned a project relating to this year's election, I paid no attention to anything having to do with the news. I would say I'm probably like the majority of teenage girls, only watching a few shows that come on during the week such as “Gossip Girl” and “Grey’s Anatomy.” I don't read the newspaper and I really found no reason to even have an interest in the election. My views were that I'm not old enough to vote, I can't make a difference, so why even pay attention? I've found several reasons. The issues discussed in this election affect my family and me. Some things more than others and the ones I'm referring to aren't even discussed that much. I've grown fonder of the election and debates and have a major interest now …
America Needs a Life Jacket
by Sarah E., Bellingham, Wash.

Dear Mr. President,

Your neighbor walks down the street, clutching a few suitcases. He can’t even afford a moving truck. He and his family have been shoved out of their house, credit card payments and a foaming river of debt rushing after them. The businesses on the corner close up shop, taping Out of Business signs on their empty windows. Large companies come crashing down, most being caught by bail-out packages offered to them. But what about the small businesses? Our economy is in crisis. ...

Heed My Warning: Invasion of Alien (Exotic) Species
by Stephanie W., Taipei City, Taiwan

Congratulations for becoming President.

In our modern world, we are separated by an invisible border between nature and our technologically advanced communities. We assume that nature can continue supporting us the way we live, and we don’t stop to consider what negative impacts we have caused. Only recently have concerns about global warming finally hit us. But there are allegedly smaller problems that are occurring on our planet that can eventually lead to a situation as catastrophic as global warming; one of these sinister problems is the global threat from invasive species. Many people have the idea that invasive species are not that bad. Well, they are wrong, invasive species pose problems that are potentially, catastrophically bad because these exotic species can and will take over the resources that were used by native species and will thus cause extinction of the organisms that were there previously. This problem creates a dangerous decrease in biodiversity, as discoverlife.org explains: “Invasive species have the ability to displace or replace native plant and animal species” (discoverlife.org).

A classic example of the potential harms can be seen in the history of Guam. Around the time of post-World War II, the brown tree snake was introduced to Guam, apparently on a cargo ship. The snake is a voracious, semi-venomous species that in less than 50 years all but destroyed bird life on the northern Pacific island of Guam. Ever since then, the biodiversity, especially of the native birds, has taken a severe hit in numbers. The snake “has killed off 10 bird species on the island and is in the process of wiping out the remaining two” (washingtonpost.com). This horrendous situation could have been prevented if leaders at the time acted more quickly and proactively. ...

We live in a time of mass extinction where nature is taking the greatest toll — one of the main reasons being the introduction of invasive exotic species by humans. If we don’t act now, if we hesitate, we will watch as our native animals and plants become extinct one by one. Therefore, I urge you, Mr. President, to start taking this problem seriously and to not let our beautiful country end up as another example of the damage invasive species may cause, but rather to let our beautiful country end up as an example of a country that has the power and will to overcome difficulties which others cannot.
THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON WRITING

The National Commission on Writing was established by the College Board in 2002 in an effort to focus national attention on the teaching and learning of writing. The decision to create the Commission was animated in part by the Board’s plans to offer a writing assessment in 2005 as part of the new SAT®, but the larger motivation lay in the growing concern within the education, business and policy-making communities that the level of writing in the United States is not what it should be. The Commission and its Advisory Group are made up of leading educators, policymakers and writing experts and over the last seven years they have worked to improve the teaching and learning of writing through research, public voice and change in practice. More information can be found at www.writingcommission.org.

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Advocacy is central to the work of the College Board. Working with members, policymakers and the education community, we promote programs, policies and practices that increase college access and success for all students. In a world of growing complexity and competing demands, we advocate to ensure that education comes first. www.collegeboard.com/advocacy

THE NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT

The National Writing Project is a professional development network that serves teachers of writing at all grade levels, primary through university, and in all subjects. The mission of the NWP is to improve student achievement by improving the teaching of writing and improving learning in the nation’s schools. Founded in 1974, the NWP has sites at more than 200 universities and colleges in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, serving more than 135,000 participants annually. www.nwp.org

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Please take care of my country, our country, wisely. I hope you read this letter and take it into consideration.

Words can be soothing to most, but we need action.

So grab hold and climb up. So Mr. President, it is up to you to direct the youth of our country into a more promising future.

I hope you can answer my questions. Remember. DON'T PANIC! It is going to be your job to help us.

Mr. President, I need you. This country needs you. In case you didn't know ... We have to make it our problem.

Congratulations on becoming the leader of the great United States. Although I am far from the age of voting...

Mr. President, I need you. This country needs you. In case you didn't know ... We have to make it our problem.

So I'm going to start right now with being honest with you. People come to this country for great opportunities.

I wish you the best of luck in your presidency. We need to publicize this.

So what do you think, Mr. President? Remember those who are in your hands.

This country is in your hands, Mr. President. The world is one team — let us unite and share our freedom with everyone.

Focus on your strengths, and work to improve your weaknesses. We have to be proactive and take action.

Right now is the right time, no more procrastinating, it is time to roll up our sleeves and deal with it.

Together we can fix this monster of an issue, but only together.

Things aren't going to be made better on their own. We need to publicize this.

The world is one team — let us unite and share our freedom with everyone.

Please take care of my country, our country, wisely. Hopefully, something will be done.

I hope you can answer my questions. Remember. DON'T PANIC! It is going to be your job to help us.

Our economy is in crisis. To space, I say!

Remember, Mr. President, it is up to you to direct the youth of our country into a more promising future.

I need an affordable education, I need your help, and so do the rest of us. Remember. DON'T PANIC! It is going to be your job to help us.

Remember those of us whose futures are in your hands.

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