Public Law 100-363
100th Congress

Joint Resolution

July 7, 1988
[S.J. Res. 304]

Designating July 2, 1988, 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 illiterate 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 concentration 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, 1988, 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 July 7, 1988.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S.J. Res. 304:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 134 (1988):
June 27, considered and passed Senate.
June 30, considered and passed House.