



DEMOCRATIC GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION
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Gov. Joe Manchin III
West Virginia
Chair

April 28, 2008

Gov. Brian Schweitzer
Montana
Vice Chair

Dear Governor:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Gov. Martin O'Malley
Maryland
Finance Chair

I am writing today to impress upon you the importance of the National Guard Youth Challenge Program. Heralded as one of the most effective and highly-rated programs for at-risk youths, the National Guard Youth Challenge Program is transforming lives and saving millions of taxpayer dollars in juvenile correction expenses across the nation.

Gov. Phil Bredesen
Tennessee
Policy Chair

The National Guard Youth Challenge Program was established by the National Guard in 1993 in order to help at-risk youths between the ages of 16 and 18, who have dropped out or have been expelled from high school. Youth Challenge's 34 program sites, across 28 states and Puerto Rico have successfully turned around the lives of over 77,000 at-risk youths. Designed in two phases, a 5 month residential program and 12 month mentoring program, participants learn invaluable life-skills, gain real-life work experience, receive on the job training, participate in community service activities and have the opportunity to earn a high school diploma (GED). My home state of West Virginia has produced thousands of Youth Challenge graduates who after completing the program, have continued on to college, military service or have found meaningful careers in the business sector.

Gov. Chet Culver
Iowa
Federal Liaison

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius
Kansas
Chair Emeritus

While Youth Challenge transforms the lives of its participants, it also saves states millions in taxpayer revenue. Nationwide the program saves \$109 million in juvenile corrections expenses, saving the taxpayer \$31.7 million per year since the program's inception. Youth Challenge has also contributed to a decrease in federal assistance, reporting that 20 percent of its enrollees have been removed from welfare programs. Not only is Youth Challenge a cost-effective program for states, it also benefits the larger community with service projects that have amounted to \$24.6 million to communities that have program sites.

Gov. Mike Beebe
Arkansas

Gov. Dave Freudenthal
Wyoming

Gov. Tim Kaine
Virginia

Gov. Janet Napolitano
Arizona

Gov. Ed Rendell
Pennsylvania

Our nation is at a cross-road where we are in danger of losing a generation of children to crime or delinquency. Every year, 1.2 million children drop out of high school - that's one in three students - leading those children to a life of government dependency, poverty, and even prison. For those who serve in public life it is a moral imperative to ensure that the youths of this country are provided with the best chance of becoming productive and responsible citizens. The National Guard Youth Challenge Program is clearly making a difference. As Governors of our respective states we can institute the necessary change that gives these at-risk youths a second chance at a productive life. Therefore, I urge you to adopt the National Guard Youth Challenge Program in your states and help change the lives of our nation's children.

Fred DuVal
Treasurer

Nathan Daschle
Executive Director

Sincerely,

Joe Manchin III