



# FROM THE ARCHIVES

## Dear Mr. President



EDUCATION

HISTORY  
TODAY

GRADES  
3-12



# EDUCATION

*From the Archives brings primary source documents and exploration into the classroom. These educational resources, carefully curated by our Education team, are meant to enhance historical discussions around relevant topics of today in history, civics, geography, and economics.*

“Dear Mr. President” brings together a wide array of letters written to President Reagan shortly after he was elected president on 4 November 1980. The letters come from students of all ages and from across the country. Some are letters that were written by the student on their own, while others were a class project. These letters contain the hopes, dreams, and concerns of these students for the incoming administration.

**Suggested Classroom Activities:** The following are ideas to get you started using these primary source documents. They represent just a few of the options you have to engage your students with this material.

## **Language Arts Teachers:**

1. Have students write a formal letter to the President. A handout showing the elements of a formal letter to the President is contained in this lesson as Appendix A. For younger students, have them write a more personal letter and perhaps illustrate it as many students did for President Reagan. Appendix B has a letter template for students that may need it.

## **Social Studies Teachers:**

1. Have students look for common themes that are represented in the letters from the students. What was going on at the time to cause so many students to focus on a relatively few number of topics? Have students break into teams to research the following topics:
  - a. Iran Hostage Crisis
  - b. Inflation/Stagflation
  - c. Energy Crisis
  - d. ERA
2. Have students write their own letter to the President. President Reagan often paraphrased John Winthrop and referred to the United States as the ‘Shining City on the Hill’. Have the students describe what their ‘Shining City’ looks like. Alternately, have them focus on one or two topics that mean a lot to them, their family, or your community and explain to the President what they would like to see him or her do to help.

## **General:**

1. Practice using other forms of communication with the President, the Administration, or other leaders. Have students try their hand at crafting Tweets, Instagrams, blog posts, comments, and Facebook messages. Appendix C contains a list of contacts for all levels of government. Appendix D contains slips that students can use to compose Tweets and conform to the 140-character limit.

**Note:** Additional letters will be available for download on the Reagan Education webpage at the address below.

Developed by  
The Walter and Leonore Annenberg Presidential Learning Center  
Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Institute  
40 Presidential Drive, Suite 200  
Simi Valley, CA 93065  
[www.reaganfoundation.org/education](http://www.reaganfoundation.org/education)

2120 Jonathan Ave  
Rockford Ill.  
Nov. 7, 1980

Dear President-elect Reagan,

Congratulations! I'm really glad that you won. My mom voted for you and so did a lot of other people that I know. I didn't want Anderson or Carter to win, I wanted you to. In our school we had a w vote and you won.

Do you believe the superstition about if the year ends with a zero (0) you will die? I don't want you to because I think you'll make a good president.

I heard a rumor that if you got in office you would start a war. Are you going to? I don't want you to. I expect now that you are in office you will free the hostages.

Sincerely,  
Debbie Pet

St. Joseph School  
20 Hackensack Street  
East Rutherford New Jersey 07073  
November 7, 1980

Dear President-elect Reagan,

In watching the Presidential Debate between yourself and President Carter, I learned a lot about each of you, and came to the decision that you were my choice for president. In my school, our Social Studies teacher set up a presidential election for all the children in our school, and you won. I was very happy when you won in my school, but even more happy when you really won. I saw you on television a couple of days ago and thought of all the good you would do as president of the United States. You made promises and I hope you keep them, because some of those promises will affect my family and me.

The reason I hope you keep your promises is because my brother is eighteen years old and he is of draft age. My brother and I are very close, I miss him, while he's away to college, so you can imagine how I would miss being with him if he's drafted. I also have many friends and friends brothers who are of draft age.

My brother is willing to go, if he's drafted, but I'd hate to see him get drafted and go off to war, when he might get

killed. I think your promises will help stop draft and that's why I want you to keep them.

I hope and expect that you will help our nation in solving all its massive problems which have caused big trouble for the U. S. If the hostages in Iran are not freed by the time you come to office I hope you will do your best in freeing them. Inflation is another problem that I hope you condense, because many, many people including me are effected by it. There are a lot of other problems that are big trouble in this country and I think you can solve them, that's why I voted for you in school. I wish you the best of luck and hope you do your best.

Sincerely yours  
Lilly Hernandez



NOV 10 1980

Student

4715 Stagecoach Rd. 97902

Eugene Oregon

November 5, 1980

Dear Governor Reagan,  
I heard that you are the  
40<sup>th</sup> president of the United  
States of America.

I hope the first thing you do  
is free the hostages from Iran  
with no problems. Then we  
need our military equipment  
put back in use so we can defend  
our country. We also need equipment  
for off-shore drilling so we don't have  
to pay wherever we are for crude  
oil to convert into gas to supply our gas  
furnaces cars, and military equipment.

I believe that you will be the  
greatest president that ever lived

Sincerely  
Michael Alan Barbour

November 14, 1980

Michael Alan Barbour  
4715 Stagecoach Road  
Eugene, Oregon 97402

Dear Michael:

I enjoyed your letter and want you to know how nice it was to hear from you.

I am glad to have your suggestions. Thank you for sharing them with me and please feel free to do so at any time.

One of the experiences Nancy and I cherished most during the long months of the campaign @ays was the greeting we received from children.

I hope you will @ive my best to your family and friends.

Sincerely,

RONALD REAGAN



III Weeks Dr.  
Enterprise, Al. 36330  
November, 4, 1980

Dear Mr. President - elect,

I would like you to know some of my ideas on the following subjects ; Inflation, Hostages, and Unemployment.

**INFLATION.** When it was time for my family and I to come back to America from living 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  years in Germany, we were excited because we have already traveled through Europe and now we get to travel through America. Our high hopes suddenly were crushed when we saw the price of gas and food. It cost us over \$50 to go to see our grandparents for gasoline alone. My grandparents live in OHIO Ohio and we just cant afford to go this year. I think in order to bring inflation down we need to cut back on energy and try to cut back on so much imported oil. We need to find energy sources of our own because we cant count on other Countries.

**HOSTAGES.** I think that somehow we should get them back. We can either try another rescue mission or meet the demands of Iran. Iran is holding innocent people for one man. Are 52 hostages worth one dead man? They are holding Americans for an Iranians wrong doing. I think that somehow we should get them back. We should also try to stop the war with Iran and Iraq. Iraq has already taken over some oil fields that we get oil from.

**Unemployment;** There are over 500,000 jobless people in the U.S. You have got to create more jobs. Bring old factories back to life, Make new factories, just create more jobs.

Sincerely yours,  
Scott Sanford

Jah

11 Manitoba way  
Marlboro, N.J. 07746  
Nov. 4, 1980

NOV 7 1980

Dear President Elect Reagan,  
My name is Suzanne Dalman. I am a 5<sup>th</sup> grader, age 10  $\frac{1}{2}$ . In school we had to write a composition on who we would vote for for president. I picked you. Unfortunately Anderson came in first but you still came in second and Carter came in last. I have heard that you don't believe in womens right, is that true? If so I would appreciate it if you would reconsider that belief.

Sincerely,  
Suzanne Dalman

P.S. Please write back.  
P.S.S. My mom & Dad voted for you.

November 13, 1980

Suzanne Salman  
11 Manitoba Way  
Marlboro, N.J. 07746

Dear Suzanne:

Thank you for your letter. I am always glad to hear from youngsters interested in public affairs.

While I oppose the so-called "Equal Rights Amendment," I am a strong supporter of Women's rights. I have enclosed a copy of my record concerning this issue for you to read.

Suzanne, give my best to your family and friends and have a good year in school.

Sincerely,

RONALD REAGAN

Enclosure  
JW:VS

Dear Mr. Reagan,

I urge you to keep all the promises you (~~made~~) made during your campaigns and to live upto them. Please try to help the serious immigration problem in Florida. I have faith that you will shape our economy up but please be careful not to hurt anyone, especially the poor people. I trust that you will bring back this country's dignity and respect like it had in past years. I urge you to work hard to free the hostages in Iran. I will support you and am proud to say you will be our president for four years.

Sincerely,

Ana Puga

6554 SW 31 St

Miami, FL 33155

# FORMAT FOR LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT



## EDUCATION

1234 Civics Drive  
Beverly Hills, CA 90210  
July 4, 2011

### Heading

Your address and the date you wrote the letter

President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

### Address

Name and address of person to whom you are writing

Dear Mr./Mrs. President:

### Salutation

A formal greeting

In the introductory paragraph, you want to be sure to introduce yourself and explain the reason you are writing in the first place. Be sure to include your name, your grade, and your school when you introduce yourself. You might also want to include an interesting fact or two that relates to your letter. For example, if you are a part of student government, or if you are involved with a service organization, you can include that information here. When you introduce your reason for writing, you should state your reason as clearly and simply as you can. There will be plenty of room to explain yourself in the next paragraph.

In this paragraph you will provide more information about your issue. You should try to give at least two specific reasons that explain why this issue is a concern to you. You should talk about how this issue affects you or those around you. Use the most compelling examples to help convince your reader of the importance of this issue.

In your final paragraph, you should suggest a solution to your concern. Nothing positive comes from complaining about an issue without any ideas about ways to solve the problem. In this section of your letter, you will present an idea for how to address your concern. Be sure to think carefully about this, and to write about it as clearly as you can.

### Body

The text of your letter

Sincerely,

Concerned Student

### Closing and Signature

A polite final closing and your name

## WRITING A LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT

*Directions: Did you know that anyone in our country can write a letter to the President of the United States? Use the sheet below to help you write a letter to the President.*

### Letter to the President

*My name is* \_\_\_\_\_

*I am in* \_\_\_\_\_ *grade at (school)* \_\_\_\_\_

*I think the biggest problem in our* \_\_\_\_\_ *is* \_\_\_\_\_

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*This is a problem because* \_\_\_\_\_

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*I think the best way to fix this problem is by* \_\_\_\_\_

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Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

## GOVERNMENT CONTACT RESOURCES

### President:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact> - Online Form.

<https://www.facebook.com/potus/> - Facebook

<https://www.instagram.com/whitehouse/> - Instagram

<https://twitter.com/potus> - Twitter

Phone: 202-456-1111

Address: The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

### First Lady/Husband:

<https://twitter.com/flotus> - Twitter

### Congress:

<http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>

[http://clerk.house.gov/member\\_info/](http://clerk.house.gov/member_info/)

<http://www.house.gov/representatives/>

<http://www.senate.gov/general/contacting.htm>

[http://www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm?OrderBy=state&Sort=ASC](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm?OrderBy=state&Sort=ASC)

Office of Senator (Name)  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Office of Representative (Name)  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

### Federal Agencies & Programs:

<https://www.usa.gov/federal-agencies/a>

### State & Local:

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/news/stategov/stategov.html>

<http://www.statelocalgov.net/>

### General Contact Sources - All Levels:

<https://www.usa.gov/agencies>





# EDUCATION

## Student Programs

### Ventura County Scholars Program



The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation Scholars Program awards Ventura County, Calif., high school seniors who exemplify outstanding leadership skills and personal character with a total of \$50,000 in scholarships annually.

### Student Leadership Program



This five day program will develop leadership skills with a goal of accomplishing the following task: identify a problem in the community and create a Leadership Action Plan to address that problem.

### The GE-Reagan Foundation Scholarship Program

The GE-Reagan Foundation Scholarship Program honors the legacy and character of our nation's 40th President by rewarding college-bound students who demonstrate exemplary leadership, drive, integrity, and citizenship with financial assistance to pursue higher education. Through the generous support of General Electric, this national program awards \$40,000 in scholarships to numerous high school students each year.



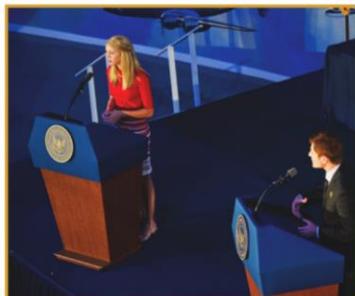
### Leadership and the American Presidency Program



The Leadership and the American Presidency is a program designed to facilitate leadership development among undergraduate students through the unique lens of the American presidency. This accredited course is grounded in real history as students critically examine the leadership journeys of presidents in relation to their own lives. Students hear from real leaders in the fields of business, government, and the nonprofit sectors learning lessons on leadership, while simultaneously applying all of these skills in the real world in an internship setting and in an authentic culminating course assessment.

### Great Communicator Debate Series

The Ronald Reagan Great Communicator Debate Series is a national series of high school debates that develops informed citizens and leaders. At the National Championship, a total of \$40,000 in scholarships is awarded.



### Student Leader Award

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Institute offers high school administrators a way to recognize outstanding high school students whose leadership, drive, integrity and citizenship skills are emblematic of our nation's 40th President.

