

January 12, 2009

Office of Public Liaison and Intergovernmental Affairs
Presidential Transition Team
Attention: Lily Rothman

This letter is a follow-up to our meeting last week regarding our policy priorities. The Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) are excited about and look forward to the January 20th inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States. His outreach to the youth of this country and his dedication to inclusiveness has inspired us to reach out to the new administration on behalf of the 2.5 million public school students and the 50,000 teachers that comprise our eight national CTSOs*. The CTSOs share the common mission of preparing students for careers and college through structured integrative programs of leadership, character development and service inside the nation's Career and Technical Education (CTE) system. Our delivery system of partnerships with all 50 state departments of education, over 15,000 schools, 50,000 teachers and many thousands of business and industry partners, uniquely positions us to assist the administration in delivering its message of unifying the nation and implementing President-elect Obama's vision of bringing about change.

We believe there is an inherent value in Career and Technical Education and the role that CTSOs as part of the instructional curricula play in preparing young people for successful transition into the workforce or to further their education and training. To that end, we urge the administration to include CTE as an important component in its plans for reform in education and economic development. A critical component of an effective national strategy to improve the impact of CTE in our nation's schools is strong leadership at the U.S. Department of Education. We recommend that the excellent selection of Mr. Arne Duncan as Secretary of Education Designee be complemented by an assistant secretary who has a strong background in CTE, research in workforce development and educational leadership. We believe that Dr. James R. Stone III, Executive Director of the National Center for Research in Career and Technical Education at the University of Louisville, would be an outstanding candidate to lead America's CTE system.

Research indicates that when students find multiple connections to school through integrative curricula activities, they are less likely to drop out of school and more likely to understand and retain academic concepts. We encourage the Obama administration to support the important CTE component of education reform by continuing to reinforce the relationship that historically has existed between administrations and the CTSOs. In addition, we highly encourage the administration to sponsor a White House conference designed to bring national attention to the value of co-curricular student leadership activities in our nation's schools.

The CTSOs welcome the opportunity for dialogue with the Obama administration as it begins its important work. Be assured that we will utilize our national network of youth, educators, parents and business partners to help forward the administration's educational agenda.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Benjamin, Chair
National Coordinating Council of Career and Technical Student Organizations

**There are eight Congressionally recognized Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) that operate as non-profit co-curricular education leadership organizations: Business Professionals of America; DECA; Future Business Leaders of America-Phi Beta Lambda; Family, Career and Community Leaders of America; Health Occupations Students of America; National FFA; SkillsUSA; and Technology Student Association.*