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MARJORIE R. ESMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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AN OPEN LETTER TO LOUISIANA SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

By Fax

Dear Superintendent:

As of course you know, January 20 is Inauguration Day. Whenever a President is inaugurated, it is an important historic occasion particularly for students, who are learning about our government and political processes and who rightly should be excited about the orderly transition of power.

This year, of course, the event has an enhanced historic significance because it represents the inauguration of our first president of African descent. While many students and school personnel will be excited, others will be less so – as is always a consequence of the election process.

You may be aware that in some communities in Louisiana and elsewhere, students were punished after Election Day last November for expressing support for the Obama victory. Some students were told not to mention the name of the President-Elect, and some were told not to talk about the election at all. In one community a student was put off the school bus because the bus driver didn't want to hear Mr. Obama's name.

Obviously, regardless of political opinion, everyone must accept and respect the President of the United States. We write to remind you that your students and staff must have the equal right to express their views of this election and inauguration, and must be encouraged to respect the President and the office of the Presidency, whether or not they agree with the individual or his policies.

We write in the hope that your schools will treat Inauguration Day as the historic occasion that it is, will use the event as a teaching opportunity to encourage respect for the institutions of this country, and will above all respect the diversity of opinions among us.

Sincerely,

Marjorie R. Esmán