Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 28, 2006

Mr. Robert Berdahl
President,
Association of American Universities
1200 New York Avenue, N.W., Suite 550
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Berdahl:

On Tuesday, November 7, Americans will go to the polls in what many nonpartisan political analysts predict will be the most consequential non-presidential election in 12 years. The domestic and foreign policies of the United States will fundamentally be affected by this fall's election, particularly if control of either house of the U.S. Congress changes.

As leaders in the effort to reform our national election system and ensure that every vote that Americans cast is counted, we are deeply concerned by the dearth of young people volunteering to serve as non-partisan poll workers on Election Day. Historically the administration of this nation's 210,000 polling places has depended on the hard work and dedication of our nation's seniors.

Make no mistake about it. These seniors are the pride of our democracy, and a true testament that the civic spirit still burns brightly in the United States. Unfortunately, elections in the United States have become increasingly complex in recent years, particularly with the advent of electronic voting machines and new federal standards for how elections must be administered. This increasing complexity, on top of the long day that volunteer poll workers endure on Election Day, has imposed extraordinary new burdens on the men and women who greet us when we enter a polling place, verify our registration, and explain how the voting process works.

Something needs to be done.

We strongly believe an easy solution is available right on the campuses of the colleges and universities that the Association of American Universities represents. College-age students represent an ideal pool of young, energetic talent to complement the existing army of volunteer poll workers. Their familiarity with computer technology and ability to work long hours can go a long way toward reversing the shrinking pool of volunteers and ensuring our democratic system works to perfection on the day that matters most: Election Day.

To that end, we strongly encourage your member institutions to urge students to become non-partisan Election Day volunteers on November 7. Through such incentives as giving extra credit and granting an absence from class for students who prove they served as poll workers, your member institutions can make a critical contribution to our nation's democracy.

Resources to help your schools get engaged now are easier to find than you may think. In 2002, President Bush signed the Help America Vote Act. This landmark legislation established the U.S. Election Assistant Commission as well as the Help America Vote College Program. To find out how easy

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it is to get your students involved on Election Day and ignite their civic spirit, just call the Election Assistant Commission at (202) 566-3100. The Commission's website is www.eac.gov.

Your schools are educating the future of our nation. By encouraging your students to join the world's largest one-day volunteer group, dedicated to fulfilling the very promise of our democracy, you can make a difference in the towns and cities in which your schools are located, and your nation as a whole.

Thank you for your attention and with kindest regards, we are

Sincerely yours,

REP. STENY H. HOYER REP. VERNON J. EHLERS REP JUANITA MILLENDER-MCDONALD