



Public involvement. Public education. Public benefit.

**Response From Wendy D. Puriefoy, President, Public Education Network to
President Obama's State of the Union address**

I am pleased that public education was an important focus of the President's speech, gaining the attention it very much needs. The President was on target in making clear the connection between a quality public education and a sound economy, and in underscoring the importance of staying in school, especially for poor kids. As he said in his address, we know that living wage jobs for kids without high school diplomas no longer exist as they once did. Furthermore, a good education is necessary for full participation as a citizen in our democracy.

Public Education Network recently embraced a compact to increase by 100,000 the numbers of students who graduate, or are on-track to graduate high school ready for college or career in the communities in which our member organizations work – all high poverty communities – by 2013. The President's proposals are very much in line with our own priorities – fully prepared teachers for every student with the supports they need, supporting students to stay in school and become ready for college, and making higher education affordable and living wage jobs available when they graduate. This work is not only essential to a strong economy, but is also the center of a strong democracy. This link between ensuring strong schools, creating new jobs, and enabling strong citizens is work that needs to be done, and PEN is pleased to be engaged in these important efforts.