

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Child Support
Correspondence

July 31, 1998

Warm greetings to everyone gathered in our nation's capital for the 47th annual training conference and exposition of the National Child Support Enforcement Association.

As you know, we cannot tolerate the crisis of unpaid child support in our country. Our first responsibility is to our children, but too many parents in America still walk away from that obligation. Working in partnership at the local, state, and federal level, we have waged an unprecedented campaign to make deadbeat parents live up to their obligations, and we are making progress. Thanks to tougher laws, more sophisticated tracking, and powerful new collection tools, we've increased child support collections by 68 percent in the last five years. Today almost a million and a half more children are receiving child support. Our new national database for identifying deadbeat parents across state lines found more than one million delinquent parents in just the first nine months of operation.

The Deadbeat Parents Punishment Act of 1998, which I signed into law just a month ago, deals with child support evaders in the most serious cases. From now on, if parents flee across state lines and refuse to pay child support, they may be charged with a federal offense and land in jail for as long as two years. And, on July 16, I was pleased to sign into law the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998, which will reward states for their performance on a wide range of key child support goals, put into place additional tough penalties for states that fail to automate their child support systems on time, and make it easier for states to secure medical support for children in cases in which the non-custodial parent has private health coverage.

With these and other successful child support initiatives, we have made a real difference for our nation's most vulnerable children and families. As members of NCSEA, you can be proud of your role in this record of achievement. But we can and must do more. The implementation of tough but fair child support enforcement is integral to promoting American values of parental responsibility, and as we continue working toward this goal, I'm grateful for your hard work and determined involvement.

Best wishes for a productive training conference and continued success in your efforts.

Bill Clinton