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KIDS VOTING USA
DATE: *2-10-93* REAVER: *U*
FROM: *Marilyn Evans*
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February 15, 1993

Ms. Wilma Mankiller
Chief Cherokee Nation
Tahtéquah, Oakland

Dear Ms. Mankiller:

We have heard about your dynamic leadership and read recently in Parade, your interest in bringing divergent populations together. Therefore, we are sure you will appreciate Kids Voting and I will take the liberty of describing our program.

Kids Voting is a wonderful concept borrowed from Costa Rica, a fine democracy with a record of 90% turnout for every election. The program goals are to increase voter participation of current and future generations.

Kids Voting works this way: Beginning in kindergarten through high school, students are given civic lessons about voting, enabling them to develop skills for becoming informed and making critical decisions. Then, on election day, if accompanied by an adult, the children are welcomed into the polls to cast ballots, voting on the same races and issues as the adults. The ballots are then tabulated and given to the media -- and often the children express different opinions than the adults. On November 3, 1992 nearly 500,000 children "voted" in their neighborhood polling places.

The first project occurred in 1988 when Arizona was faced with enormous challenges due to the leadership of Governor Mechem, elected with very low turnout. In 1990 and 1992, Kids Voting was statewide, and also last year pilot projects occurred in ten other states. On the average, Kids Voting has increased voter turnout by 3% but the project contributes on several levels. For instance, Kids Voting is creating the debate about candidates and issues across generations: 82% of parents who were registered voters indicated their children initiated discussion at home about the elections and 40% stated they were better informed as voters due to the children's involvement in Kids Voting.