



PROCLAMATION

- WHEREAS,** SINCE ITS INVENTION BY LOUIS BRAILLE (1809-1852), THE READING AND WRITING CODE FOR THE BLIND THAT BEARS HIS NAME HAS BECOME THE ACCEPTED METHOD OF READING AND WRITING FOR THE BLIND THE WORLD OVER; AND
- WHEREAS,** BRAILLE IS USED TO REPRESENT NOT ONLY THE ALPHABETS OF MOST WRITTEN LANGUAGES, BUT IS ALSO USED FOR MATHEMATICAL AND SCIENTIFIC NOTATION AND THE REPRODUCTION OF MUSICAL SCORES; AND
- WHEREAS,** BRAILLE PROVIDES PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND WITH THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE, EXPANDING THEIR OPPORTUNITIES AND EQUIPPING THEM WITH THE TOOLS TO BE PRODUCTIVE AND IMAGINATIVE CONTRIBUTORS TO SOCIETY; AND
- WHEREAS,** CONTRARY TO WIDELY BELIEVED MYTHS, BRAILLE IS NOT DIFFICULT TO LEARN, NOR IS READING BRAILLE SLOWER THAN READING PRINT; AND
- WHEREAS,** WHILE TECHNOLOGY HAS IMPROVED THE LIVES OF BLIND PEOPLE BY FACILITATING QUICK ACCESS TO INFORMATION, NO TECHNOLOGY CAN REPLACE BRAILLE LITERACY, SINCE LITERACY IS THE ABILITY TO READ AND TO WRITE AND TO DO THE TWO INTERACTIVELY; AND
- WHEREAS,** DESPITE ITS EFFICIENCY, VERSATILITY, AND UNIVERSAL ACCEPTANCE BY THE BLIND, THE RATE OF BRAILLE LITERACY IN THE UNITED STATES HAS DECLINED TO THE POINT WHERE ONLY 10 PERCENT OF BLIND CHILDREN ARE LEARNING TO READ AND WRITE BRAILLE; AND
- WHEREAS,** JUST AS A LITERACY RATE OF 10 PERCENT AMONG THIS NATION'S SIGHTED CHILDREN WOULD BE RIGHTLY VIEWED AS A CRISIS AND AS CAUSE FOR NATIONAL OUTRAGE, THE DECLINE IN BRAILLE LITERACY IS A CRISIS AND SWIFT ACTION MUST BE TAKEN TO REVERSE THIS DANGEROUS TREND; AND
- WHEREAS,** BRAILLE LITERACY IS THE KEY TO INDEPENDENCE, PRODUCTIVITY, AND SUCCESS FOR BLIND PEOPLE, AS EVIDENCED BY THE FACT THAT WHILE 70 PERCENT OF THE BLIND ARE UNEMPLOYED, 85 PERCENT OF THOSE WHO ARE EMPLOYED USE BRAILLE; AND
- WHEREAS,** THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF BRAILLE AND THE MAGNITUDE OF THE BRAILLE LITERACY CRISIS IN 2006 BY PASSING THE LOUIS BRAILLE BICENTENNIAL-BRAILLE LITERACY COMMEMORATIVE COIN ACT AUTHORIZING THE STRIKING OF A UNITED STATES SILVER DOLLAR IN COMMEMORATION OF THE TWO-HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF LOUIS BRAILLE; AND
- WHEREAS,** THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND, THE NATION'S OLDEST AND LARGEST ORGANIZATION OF BLIND PEOPLE AND THE LEADING ADVOCATE FOR BRAILLE LITERACY HAS LAUNCHED A NATIONAL "BRAILLE READERS ARE LEADERS" CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF BRAILLE AND TO INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF COMPETENT BRAILLE INSTRUCTION AND OF BRAILLE READING MATERIALS IN THIS COUNTRY, SAID CAMPAIGN TO BE FUNDED BY A PORTION OF THE PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF THE LOUIS BRAILLE BICENTENNIAL SILVER DOLLAR; AND
- WHEREAS,** THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND HAS TODAY RELEASED A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ENTITLED THE BRAILLE LITERACY CRISIS IN AMERICA - FACING THE TRUTH, REVERSING THE TREND, EMPOWERING THE BLIND, AND THE UNITED STATES MINT HAS THIS DAY RELEASED THE LOUIS BRAILLE BICENTENNIAL SILVER DOLLAR FOR PURCHASE BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC.
- NOW, THEREFORE, I, T. M. FRANKLIN COWNIE, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF DES MOINES, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM MARCH 26, 2009, AS:

NATIONAL BRAILLE READERS ARE LEADERS DAY

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I HAVE HEREUNTO SET MY HAND AND CAUSED THE SEAL OF THE CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA TO BE AFFIXED THIS TWENTY SIXTH DAY OF MARCH, TWO THOUSAND NINE.

**T. M. FRANKLIN COWNIE, MAYOR
CITY OF DES MOINES**

