



EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
MOSCOW

July 17, 2009

OFFICE OF THE AMBASSADOR

Mr. Henderson's Current Issues Class  
West Forsyth High School, Cumming, GA USA

Dear Students:

I was greatly impressed by the initiative, comprehensive evaluation and insightful conclusions you in Mr. Henderson's Current Issues class have reached with your Russian counterparts in Mrs. Ogorodnikova's English class from Kirov City, Russia. Your letter of June 10 identifies a number of issues at the center of United States-Russian relations. They are things our two countries have both cooperated on and struggled over in recent years but, most importantly, as you state, they are issues that we must constantly work to improve.

As you know, President Barack Obama recently visited Moscow to discuss some of the issues you raise. Agreements were signed that will lead to new reductions in our nuclear arsenals, and a strategy for countering the spread of nuclear weapons was laid out. The commitment to improving U.S.-Russian relations shown by Russian President Medvedev and President Obama made these agreements possible and is a first step in what I believe will be an era of more constructive, productive bilateral relations.

This is especially true because of students like you. Whether discussing security in Europe or the challenges of terrorism, in the classroom or at a summit, each of us plays a role in improving U.S.-Russian relations. As President Obama said in Moscow at the graduation ceremony for the New Economic School's Class of 2009, "governments can provide this cooperation but individuals must advance this cooperation." During your correspondence with Mrs. Ogorodnikova's English class you are representing your country as well as any diplomat abroad and contributing directly to the improvement of U.S.-Russian relations. Thank you for your help!

Although each of your points is of great importance to the future of world affairs, I believe the most important concerns cultural exchanges. After college, I worked on U.S. Information Agency exhibitions that traveled around the U.S.S.R. and displayed aspects of American culture. These exhibits brought Americans and Russians together, allowing citizens divided by years of Cold War to look beyond the cloak of fear, shake hands with one another, talk about our families, realize our similarities, and become closer. It was an unforgettable experience. Your interaction with Russian counterparts is an exchange of cultures as well. Find a way to keep these contacts going!

Sincerely,

John Beyrle  
Ambassador