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**To:** Ms. Samantha Tubman  
Assistant to the Dr. Jill Biden  
**From:** David Silva (NOAO)  
**CC:** William Smith (AURA)  
**Date:** 13 March 2009  
**Subject:** White House Star Party

Dear Ms. Tubman,

I understand that the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) has proposed holding a “Star Party” at the White House sometime during 2-5 April as part of the International Year of Astronomy 2009 (IYA2009) and the “100 Hours of Astronomy” worldwide cornerstone project. I wish to add my support for such an event. A party hosted for school children to celebrate science is a profound opportunity to spark a student's interest in the physical sciences!

The U.S. International Year of Astronomy Project Office is based here at the National Optical Astronomy Observatory (NOAO) and funded by the National Science Foundation. The IYA2009 Project Director and Manager of Science Education at NOAO, Dr. Stephen Pompea, has led a team that has developed a high-quality, inexpensive student telescope kit for urban viewing that is able to see the rings of Saturn. We would love to help with the star party and have kids observe through the “Galileoscope”. The “Galileoscope” will be distributed to tens of thousands of kids in the next year for less than \$15 each and comes with a complete set of well-tested science, math, and technology standards-based educational materials.

The National Optical Astronomy Observatory is also home to the national and international cornerstone Dark Skies Awareness Project, which is designed to educate the public on how a very significant amount of energy can be saved through better lighting.

I believe that holding a Star Party at the nation's capitol would send a positive message in support of education and global cooperation. The Star Party can be connected with schools and planetariums across the globe, allowing students, teachers, and parents to participate in their own classrooms and local planetariums. The potential for cultural and educational opportunities sparked by this event are enormous, and we will assist in any way we can.

Please host a Star Party at the White House to celebrate IYA2009 and promote science education and awareness.

Sincerely,

Dr. David Silva  
Director  
The National Optical Astronomy Observatory  
[www.noao.edu](http://www.noao.edu)