Include School Libraries in Education Programs

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

National Library Legislative Day
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ALA’s Position: The American Library Association urges Congress, when it reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), to include school libraries by incorporating the following provisions:

- Maintain dedicated federal funding for school libraries;
- Include provisions under Title I state and local plans and the Race to the Top Fund to establish a state goal of having a school library staffed by a state-certified school librarian in each public school; and,
- Allow state and local professional development funds to be used for recruiting and training school librarians.

The inclusion of school libraries into Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization is vitally important. Research shows students perform better in schools with a quality school library. Without a quality school library, students miss out on opportunities and lessons that a school librarian can provide. School librarians help students gain an appreciation and enjoyment of reading. Additionally, they also teach students how to safely and efficiently use the Internet and new technology. And they help students.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, formerly known as “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB), was scheduled to be reauthorized in 2009. This legislation has not yet been reintroduced in either the House or the Senate in the 113th Congress. However, both Republicans and Democrats in the House and Senate have expressed interest in reauthorizing ESEA this Congress. It is expected that similar legislation will be introduced once again the 113th Congress.

School libraries were left out as a federal requirement under NCLB in 2002 and as a result many school libraries were the first to be eliminated when schools were faced with recent budget cuts. Just like No Child Left Behind, when ESEA is reauthorized it will dictate K-12 policy at all levels of government for the decade to come. It is vital for the success of students that school libraries are part of their K-12 learning experiences.