RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE SCHOOL LIBRARY ACTIVITIES UNDER THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT (ESEA)

The American Library Association (ALA) encourages Congress to include provisions in the reauthorization of ESEA to improve academic achievement by ensuring our public schools have libraries staffed by state-licensed school librarians.

- **21st century school library programs provide students with more than just books selected to hone readers’ developing skills and to instill a love of reading.** While reading and books are a mainstay of the school library program, today’s school libraries are also sophisticated learning environments that provide the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace – but only when staffed by qualified professionals trained to collaborate with teachers and engage students meaningfully with information that matters to them both in the classroom and in the real world.

- **School librarians know the school’s curriculum and effective techniques necessary to cross disciplines and integrate information and technology literacy.** They have collaboration skills for effective participation in the school improvement process through involvement in curriculum development, as well as implementation and evaluation with individual educators and departmental committees, and are well-positioned to participate in the improvement of data-based assessment systems.

- **Not surprisingly, research repeatedly shows that a well-funded and fully staffed school library with a state-licensed school librarian is an integral component of a student’s successful education.** Across the United States, studies have demonstrated that students in schools with good school libraries learn more, get better grades, and score higher on standardized test scores than their peers in schools without such resources.

- **Because ESEA does not highlight the direct correlation between a school library (staffed by a state-licensed school librarian) and increased student academic achievement, library resource budgets are increasingly being used to mitigate the effects of budgetary shortfalls.** Unfortunately, school libraries are some of the most underfunded classrooms in America and only 60 percent of our school libraries have a full-time, state-licensed school librarian on staff.

**ESEA Reauthorization Recommendations to Support School Libraries**

ALA believes that taking action to fund school library programs with state-licensed school librarians is imperative. Research and experience points out that doing so leads to improved results for students, long-term gains in school and school system capacity, and increased
productivity and effectiveness. In order for states to articulate an innovative, comprehensive, coordinated commitment to reform, they must invest in school library programs headed by state-licensed school librarians. Accordingly, ALA asks that Congress include the following recommendations in the reauthorization of ESEA:

1. 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-licensed school librarian in each public school (validated through accountability performance measures that include baseline data and annual reporting on progress made on such data). As part of the Race to the Top program, States are required to establish baseline data and report on various performance measures (such as state progress on the distribution of effective teachers). Similar performance measures should be added to Title I state and local plans and the Race to the Top Fund with regard to school libraries staffed by state-licensed school librarians.

2. Maintain dedicated funding for the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program. Despite its success in improving academic achievement, the FY 2011 budget request for the Department of Education consolidates and eliminates dedicated funding for the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program. The Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program improves the literacy skills and academic achievement of students by providing them with increased access to up-to-date school library materials; well-equipped, technologically advanced school library media centers; and well-trained, professionally certified school librarians.

3. Allow state and local professional development funds to be used for recruiting and training school librarians. Currently, school librarians are not active participants in various professional development programs (such as the Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund and the Enhancing Education Through Technology Fund) even though they are a critical tool used to improve student academic achievement. ESEA should encourage participation of librarians in such programs.