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Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) National Library Legislative Day May 5–6, 2014

ALA's Position: The American Library Association (ALA) urges that when Congress reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), it include effective school library programs 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-licensed school librarian in each public school; and,
- Allow state and local professional development funds to be used to recruit and train school librarians.

Background:

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), formerly known as “*No Child Left Behind*” (NCLB), is the authorization legislation for many federal K-12 education programs. Having been scheduled to be reauthorized in 2007, Congress has not yet passed any legislation that would do so. When ESEA is finally reauthorized it will dictate K-12 policy at all levels of government for many years to come. Therefore, the inclusion of school librarians into ESEA reauthorization is vitally important. School libraries were left out as a federal requirement under NCLB in 2002 and, as a result, many school librarians were the first to be eliminated when schools were faced with budget cuts in recent years.

In the U.S. Senate

The Senate ESEA bill (S. 1094, the Strengthening America's Schools Act) authorizes a new school library program (Improving Literacy and College and Career Readiness Through Effective School Library Programs) that would provide dedicated funding to support effective school library programs that:

- Are staffed by a state-certified or licensed school librarian;
- Have up-to-date books, materials, equipment and technology (including broadband);
- Include regular collaboration between classroom teachers and school librarians to assist with development and implementation of the curriculum and other school reform efforts;
- Support the development of digital literacy skills.

The Senate ESEA bill also authorizes a new literacy program (Improving Literacy Instruction) that would authorize public library programs as eligible entities for grants to provide children from birth through kindergarten with literacy instruction.

- In addition, the bill authorizes a librarian to serve as a member of the State Literacy Leadership Team and ensures that a state that receives a grant works to strengthen partnerships among schools, libraries, and other programs to improve literacy for all children.

In the U.S. House of Representatives

The House passed ESEA bill (H.R. 5) does *not* include provisions that would provide dedicated funding for school or public libraries. This bill passed the House with a 221-207 vote on July 19, 2013.