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## **School Library Federal Funding National Library Legislative Day May 5–6, 2014**

***ALA's Position:*** The American Library Association (ALA) asks the U.S. President and the U.S. Congress for level funding of the *Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL)* program at \$25 million for FY 2015.

### **Innovative Approaches to Literacy**

In FY 2014, the *Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL)* program was appropriated at \$25 million. By law, at least half of this money (\$12.5 million) must be allocated to a competitive grant program for underserved school libraries. The remaining money is allocated to competitive grants for national nonprofit organizations that work to improve childhood literacy.

President Obama's FY 2015 budget request sent to Congress on March 4, 2014, did not make a funding request for the IAL program. However, two Dear Colleague Letters have recently been sent to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees asking that IAL again be funded at \$25 million in FY 2015. The letter in the House had 127 signatures from representatives, while a similar letter in the Senate had 29 signatures from various senators.

### **Background:**

From 2002 to 2010, the *Improving Literacy through School Libraries* program was the primary source for federal funding for school libraries in the U.S. Department of Education. However, in recent years the President and U.S. Congress have consolidated or zero-funded this program. A special thanks to Sens. Jack Reed (D-RI) and Thad Cochran (R-MS) who recognized that school libraries need a direct funding source in the federal budget—and in FY 2012, through report language in the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, had the money redirected within the U.S. Department of Education for the *Innovative Approaches to Literacy* program.

With *Improving Literacy through School Libraries* defunded, *Innovative Approaches to Literacy* has become the primary source for federal funding for school libraries. These funds help school libraries in low-income schools to update library book resources and equipment, thus allowing children from disadvantaged areas to have the best opportunities to become college and career ready.