KEY ISSUE: TELECOMMUNICATIONS

OBJECTIVES – ALA is dedicated to maximizing freedom of speech, educational achievement and our nation’s economic growth. We thus are committed to: preserving an open internet and the FCC’s “network neutrality” rules, modernizing its Lifeline program, and ensuring that all libraries have access to affordable high-capacity broadband communications services. ALA also strongly backs the creation of new opportunities for underserved and rural committees to access the Internet, and efforts to ensure that sufficient and appropriate spectrum continues to be available for public use.

PERSPECTIVE: Committed to affording everyone the broadest possible access to information, librarians are the original “search engine.” Historically in the vanguard of adopting and helping the public successfully use the latest information technologies, libraries were among the nation’s first core institutions to embrace and harness the power of the internet. Today’s 21st century libraries offer access not only to print materials and the Internet, but to: government services, online education, marketing data for entrepreneurs and established businesses, job training and retraining for veterans and many others, meeting and teleconferencing facilities, and even 3D printers. Viewed by almost all Americans as indispensable to their communities, public libraries alone host more than 4 million visitors daily across America. Assured library access to affordable high-capacity broadband internet service is critical to meeting that extraordinary demand . . . and to fully realizing the human, civic and economic potential of the digital age.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION: ALA urges Members of the 115th Congress to . . .

♦ **OPPOSE** the Restoring Internet Freedom Act (S. 993) and such any legislation that fails to preserve the core principles of network neutrality articulated in the FCC’s 2015 Open Internet Order to ensure neutrality on all public networks, and prohibit practices like paid prioritization and blocking.

♦ **SUPPORT** the FCC E-rate modernization orders of 2014, which ensure that libraries and schools have access to high-speed broadband connectivity, increase the E-rate fund by $1.5 billion, and act to reasonably ensure that all applications will be funded. ALA supports permitting sufficient time for the 2014 modernization orders to be fully implemented before any changes are considered.

♦ **MODERNIZE** the FCC’s 1980s-era “Lifeline” program to close the “homework gap” between students with ready access to high speed internet service at home (and on their own mobile devices) and the estimated 5 million school children in US households whose economic circumstances require them to rely solely upon public broadband access at their local libraries;

♦ **ENDORSE** efforts in Congress and at the FCC to increase the amount of unlicensed spectrum available to support critical 21st century library technology services in every library in America, as well as the emerging and rapidly evolving “Internet of Things;” and

♦ **ENCOURAGE** the FCC to heed public calls for it to preempt state laws that create artificial barriers to broadband infrastructure investment, deployment, competition and innovation, and to foster more competition in the provision of high-capacity broadband internet services.