

## **2013-2014 ALA CD#37**

### ***Failed and 2 substitutes passed***

#### **Resolution on Whistleblower Edward Snowden**

Whereas, in 2004 ALA passed a “Resolution on Securing Government Accountability through Whistleblower Protection” affirming its “support for accountable government and the role of whistleblowers in reporting abuse, fraud, and waste in governmental activities” (CD#20.7, 2004); and

Whereas, in 2008 ALA passed a “Resolution Commending the FBI Whistleblower Who Exposed Abuses on the Use of Exigent National Security Letters” stating that ALA “commends Mr. Bassem Youssef for bringing these serious abuses before the ALA and the American public,” and “supports and defends Mr. Youssef’s right to report on FBI abuses,” and “urges the FBI to desist from any retaliation against Mr. Youssef for speaking before us” (CD#20.5, 2008); and

Whereas, in 2011 ALA passed a “Resolution on Access to and Classification of Government Information,” which urged “Congress to pass legislation that expands protections for whistleblowers in the Federal government, such as the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2010” (CD#19.1, 2011); and also urged “the U.S. President, Congress, the federal courts, and executive and legislative agencies to defend the inalienable right of the press and citizens to disseminate information to the public about national security issues and to refrain from initiatives that impair these rights” (CD#19.1, 2011); and

Whereas, in 2013 ALA passed a “Resolution on the Need for Reforms for the Intelligence Community to Support Privacy, open Government, Government Transparency, and Accountability,” which

1. reaffirmed “its unwavering support for the fundamental principles that are the foundation of our free and democratic society, including a system of public accountability, government transparency, and oversight that supports people’s right to know about and participate in our government”;
2. referred to recent “revelations related to NSA’s surveillance activities conducted pursuant to orders issued by the Foreign Intelligent Surveillance Court (FISC) under Sections 215 and 702 of the USA PATRIOT Act”;
3. in light of these revelations, called upon “upon the U.S. Congress, President Obama, and the Courts to reform our nation’s climate of secrecy, overclassification, and secret law regarding national security and surveillance, to align with these democratic principles”;

4. stated that ALA “values access to the documents disclosing the extent of public surveillance and government secrecy as access to these documents now enables the critical public discourse and debate needed to address the balance between our civil liberties and national security” and noted that “these disclosures enable libraries to support such discourse and debate by providing information and resources and for deliberative dialogue and community engagement”;

5. noted that ALA “remains concerned about due process for the people who have led us to these revelations”; and

6. expressed “its thanks and appreciation to the members of Congress who work to protect our privacy and civil liberties” (CD#19.2 and CD#20.40); and

Whereas, Edward Snowden, formerly a computer specialist for a contractor employed by the National Security Agency, has admitted to providing to the news media the recently disclosed classified documents revealing mass NSA surveillance of the U.S. and global publics; and

Whereas, Edward Snowden has explained that his “sole motive” in revealing this information was “to inform the public as to that which was done in their name and that which is done against them”; and

Whereas, In June 2013 both the ALA membership and ALA Council explicitly recognized "Edward Snowden as a whistleblower who, in releasing information that documents government attacks on privacy, free speech, and freedom of association, has performed a valuable service in launching a national dialogue about transparency, domestic surveillance, and overclassification," (MMD#5, 2013; CD#39, 2013) but this resolution was effectively rescinded by the adoption of a substitute resolution (CD#19.2 and CD#20.40); and

Whereas, as a direct consequence of the Snowden revelations, numerous bills have been introduced in Congress limiting the mass collection of data of U.S. citizens; and

Whereas, despite his temporary asylum in Russia, Edward Snowden faces the possibility of eventual extradition and prosecution for releasing this information; now, therefore be it

*Resolved*, that the American Library Association (ALA):

recognizes Edward Snowden as a whistleblower who, in releasing information that documents the mass surveillance programs of the National Security Agency has performed a valuable service in launching a dialogue about transparency, government surveillance, and overclassification.

Moved by Diedre Conkling (541-961-3117)

Seconded by Jane Glasby (510-206-8614)

## **Citations**

CD#20.7, 2004

<http://www.ala.org/offices/sites/ala.org.offices/files/content/wo/reference/colresolutions/PDFs/000002-CD20.7.pdf>

CD#20.5, 2008

<http://www.ala.org/offices/sites/ala.org.offices/files/content/wo/reference/colresolutions/PDFs/COL%20Resolution%20on%20Ba.pdf>

CD,#19.1, 2011

[http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/council/council\\_documents/2011mw\\_council\\_docs/cd19\\_19\\_1\\_ifc.pdf](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/council/council_documents/2011mw_council_docs/cd19_19_1_ifc.pdf)

CD#19.2 and CD#20.40, 2013 <http://www.oif.ala.org/oif/?p=4803>

MMD#5, 2013 and CD#39, 2013

[http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/council/council\\_documents/2013\\_annual\\_council\\_docs/cd\\_39\\_edward\\_snowden-%28ff%29.pdf](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/council/council_documents/2013_annual_council_docs/cd_39_edward_snowden-%28ff%29.pdf)

FISA and NSA Resolutions Introduced in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (Revised 11/1/13)

[http://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/privacyconfidentiality/fisa\\_nsa\\_113th\\_congress.pdf](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/privacyconfidentiality/fisa_nsa_113th_congress.pdf)