

**Report to Council  
2021 ALA Virtual Council Meeting  
Joe Thompson, Chair—ALA Committee on Legislation (COL)  
June 29, 2021**

COL committee members: Joseph Thompson (Chair), Brandon Wright Adler, Robert Barr, Sara Dallas, Aaron Dobbs, Erin Huckaby Downey, Lori Fisher, Sarah Hammill, Lisa Jochelson, Charles Kratz, Kathleen Peiffer, Ella Mulford, Eric Suess, Bradley Wiles, Matt Matkowski.

Big Win with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Very successful! That's the best way to describe the impact of library advocacy since Virtual Midwinter in January 2021. We thank the Public Policy & Advocacy (PPA) Office, library advocates, state chapters, and key advocates in districts who helped make sure that libraries got a sizeable portion of the 1.9 trillion stimulus legislation to offset costs incurred from the COVID-19 pandemic in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). **This is the largest spending bill with unprecedented levels of direct and indirect funding for libraries ever approved by Congress.**

- ARPA included \$200 million for libraries through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Of the \$200 million for IMLS, 89 percent (\$178 million) is allocated for state library administrative agencies.
- ARPA provides billions of dollars in library-eligible funding, with more than \$360 billion going to state, local and tribal governments.
- ARPA also provided more than \$7 billion for libraries and schools (including tribal libraries and schools) to purchase and distribute technology necessary for remote learning, working from home, virtual healthcare visits and more. The bill calls for an Emergency Education Connectivity Fund through the FCC's E-rate program. Participating libraries will receive 100% reimbursement for the cost of hotspots and other Wi-Fi-capable devices such as modems, routers, laptops, and tablets. The connectivity fund is a new program, and ALA provided input during the rulemaking process.
- Another program funded through ARPA aimed at addressing the digital divide, the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, provides a discount up to \$50 per month for broadband service (or up to \$75 per month on qualifying tribal lands) and a one-time discount up to \$100 for a laptop, desktop, or tablet computer purchased through a participating provider. PPA submitted comments to the FCC to highlight how libraries provide the public with resources and outreach materials and ALA's comments also requested the FCC provide support materials for libraries and other community organizations so that staff are prepared to provide the best information when the program is implemented.
- Librarian and library workers in all settings can help raise awareness of this new emergency funding. A customized press release, fact sheet, and newsletter blurb are available at [www.ala.org/advocacy/broadband](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/broadband)

### Library Advocates Push for Library Appropriations

The Federal budget process traditionally starts when the President submits the Administration's budget to Congress. In the first year of a new administration, this budget submission is often delayed while the administration gets its feet on the ground. The Biden Administration budget was further delayed due in part to the early focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and under-staffing at key budget offices. While this delay was anticipated, ALA and library advocates continued to push for additional funding.

The Biden Administration submitted its budget on May 28, which supports \$265 million in total for IMLS in FY 2022, including \$197 million for the IMLS-administered Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), and \$28 million for Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) in FY 2022 administered through the Department of Education. The proposed number for the full IMLS budget saw an increase of \$8 million from last year, which totaled \$257 million in FY 2021. The proposed funding for the LSTA and IAL are level with the FY 2021 final budget, both of which received increases from the previous year. The administration's budget for library programs reflects its focus on equity and inclusion, and ALA will continue to emphasize to Congress and the Administration that equity as a library priority. The \$8 million plus-up is a welcome change following four years of proposed elimination of IMLS.

### COL Supports Virtual Targeted Advocacy Meetings

Because both National Library Legislative Day and Fly-in meetings were cancelled due to the COVID 19 pandemic, COL members and other library advocates participated in virtual targeted meetings organized by PPA during National Library Week in March. Advocates met with Members of Congress who are appropriators and some new members that could be cultivated as library champions to request continued federal funding for libraries. It is imperative that ALA advocates continue to have a touchpoint with Congress to remind them of how libraries have been vital in their communities providing broadband access, telehealth support, and additional resources for students and job seekers as education remains virtual and unemployment grows. PPA staff worked with schedulers in Washington, DC to organize the meetings and developed an online platform that was used for the meetings.

87 ALA advocates from key congressional districts and staff met with 70 members of Congress - both Democratic and Republican - in the House and Senate. This included 23 new members and 47 appropriators. The meetings led to a good discussion with Members of Congress about library needs with some members also agreeing to support the Build America's Libraries Act following the meetings. (For more detail, see PPA's Council Report ALA CD #30)

### Visibility and Support for the Build America's Libraries Act (BALA) Increases

Outreach to members of Congress, allies, and library advocates on the Build America's Libraries Act (H.R. 1581 / S. 127) has been a full court press in 2021. The **\$5 billion** one-time infusion of funding for public, tribal, and state libraries that serve the public would radically enhance library services—particularly in long-under resourced communities of color. As of June 16, the bill's cosponsors have grown to 128 bipartisan Representatives - including a majority of House Democrats - and 23 Senators. COL and Committee on Library Advocacy (COLA) are mobilizing ALA members to advocate with their legislators, share the information widely through their libraries' networks, and use the hashtag #BuildLibraries to increase awareness and engagement. *Get involved! This is a tremendous opportunity for libraries!*

Late breaking news: President Biden announced on June 24<sup>th</sup> that a bipartisan deal on a smaller infrastructure funding package has been made. However, the President may not sign the

infrastructure deal if Congress doesn't also pass a reconciliation bill addressing climate change, health care and education. This may change day-to-day as negotiations continue.

### Covid Vaccine Working Group Report

At ALA Virtual Midwinter 2021, members of ALA Council introduced resolution ALA CD #45, requesting that ALA ask the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to include library workers in priority phase 1b recommendations for receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. Some councilors voiced concern that it was not appropriate and could be problematic for ALA as a national association to direct how states manage their vaccine roll-out plans. After Council discussion, an amended resolution was adopted by Council, affirming "that library workers have a fundamental right to a safe work environment. This includes, but is not limited to, a library or other work setting that minimizes an employee's environmental risk of exposure to COVID-19." The resolution also directed Chapter Relations, COLA, and COL to form a working group to gather information and provide [a report](#) to Council.

In response to the concerns that ALA not engage in state health governance, the report included a reminder of the [ALA State and Local Protocol](#) established in 2008 at the request of ALA's Executive Board. The protocol details when and how the Office would intercede in urgent state or local library issues, such as library bond referendums or censorship challenges to library materials, services, and programs. The rationale behind the request was that while ALA as an organization can engage with states to assist with local concerns, state library associations are self-governing and are in the best position to know the political climate and local governing structures, citizen viewpoints, and other intricacies of their communities. The protocol advises that ALA provide assistance only with the permission of and in coordination with the state.

The report also included a Chapter Relations survey of the 50 state libraries and the District of Columbia to determine how each U.S. state planned to implement the CDC guidance "to help state, local, tribal, and territorial officials and organizations prepare for the allocation of initially limited COVID-19 vaccine supply." Not surprisingly, the survey revealed a patchwork of approaches across the country, sometimes with variations from one locality to the next reflecting local concerns and priorities as anticipated in the ALA State and Local Protocol.

The Working Group advised in its conclusion that while supporting the recommendation that "library workers who are at heightened risk for exposure to COVID-19, such as those providing in-person services, be prioritized for access to vaccinations," that determination cannot be made for libraries uniformly. Strong working relationships with state and local elected officials are critical, and ALA is committed to honoring and supporting those strong relationships that state associations have cultivated. Moreover, "it is imperative that ALA advocacy efforts be focused on issues where library representation is necessary, such as federal funding for libraries, broadband, copyright, and government information. These are library-centered issues that involve federal action, where ALA must lead and where federal advocacy can make a difference."

### Meeting with Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT)

COL members met with Social Responsibility Roundtable (SRRT) members to discuss how the COL Legislative Agenda is determined. SRRT was also interested in PPA's work with coalition groups in DC to further advocacy efforts on issues that may not be part of the Legislative Agenda. For example, PPA will work with the National Conference on Civil Rights and their coalition to act on voting rights legislation if it comes to the floor. PPA is also working with a group of smaller Internet companies on Section 230 of the Communications Act in anticipation of congressional action

Read the PPA ALA CD #20 for more information on coalitions, advocacy communications, and regulatory comments, and more.

### COL Subcommittees

The Copyright Legislation Education and Advocacy Network (CLEAN) discussed plans for educational programming proposals at LibLearnX next January. Proposals will include K-12 copyright education and programs on the Copyright Alternative in Small-Claims Enforcement (“CASE”) Act. The legislation requires that libraries receive a pre-emptive opt-out but how this process will work as not yet been determined. CASE is not expected to be fully operational for several months. CLEAN plans to collect and present data on “dueling licenses” that allow rights holders to double dip. This occurs when the library already has a blanket license for music but is asked to pay again when content is streamed. CLEAN members reported on new copyright training being provided to undergraduates on music sampling.

The Government Information Subcommittee (GIS) met during the Annual conference. The subcommittee heard an update from the Government Publishing Office, including the Office’s appropriations request, current initiatives, and proposal to update the statute for the Federal Depository Library Program (Title 44 of the U.S. Code). The subcommittee also discussed current work of the Depository Library Council, the Government Documents Roundtable’s advocacy plan, and news from ALA’s Public Policy and Advocacy office. The Joint Committee on Printing now has members from the House and the Senate with Sen. Klobuchar as Chair and Congresswoman Lofgren as Vice-Chair.

### Open Educational Resources (OER) Council resolution

A working group of COL and Intellectual Freedom Committee members met in May to develop a Council resolution in support of open educational resources. IFC will present “Resolution in Support of Open Educational Resources” as an action item in their report to Council.