

**EBD #12.40  
2018-2019**

**TO:** ALA Executive Board

**RE:** Public Policy and Advocacy Office Report

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:**

No action requested

**CONTACT PERSON:**

Kathi Kromer, Associate Executive Director  
(202) 628-8410  
kkromer@alawash.org

**DATE:** June 5, 2019

**BACKGROUND:**

Report of activities of ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Public Policy and Advocacy Report

## **ALA PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY REPORT**

### OFFICE NEWS

#### **PPA hosts ALA staff, library leaders in Washington**

The PPA team welcomed OIF Interim Director Deborah Caldwell-Stone and the Association of Research Libraries' (ARL) new senior director of public policy and general counsel, [Ryan Clough](#), for a meet-and-greet lunch in May. Clough previously worked as general counsel for longtime ALA coalition partner [Public Knowledge](#), a nonprofit organization that promotes freedom of expression, an open internet and access to affordable communications tools and creative works. Before that, Clough was legislative counsel for U.S. Representative Zoe Lofgren of California.

#### **PPA welcomes summer fellows, interns**

ALA's 2019 [Google Policy Fellow](#) Katelyn Ringrose will spend ten weeks in Washington, D.C. exploring diverse areas of the information policy field, joining the Public Policy and Advocacy team from May 28 through August 10, 2019. A graduate of the University of Notre Dame Law School, Ringrose will spend the summer investigating the role of libraries in easing the ex-prisoner reentry process and reducing recidivism. As a Google Fellow, her project will focus on the interchange of public policy discussions, technological advancements and the realities of the criminal justice system.

#### **ALA reorganizes Public Policy and Advocacy Office, prepares for buildout of national network**

To align ALA's federal, state and local advocacy efforts, the former Office of Library Advocacy (OLA) as a stand-alone unit has been eliminated and the responsibilities absorbed by PPA. The reorganization will better position ALA for the future in building a national network of ALA advocates as well as make ALA more effective and collaborative in our policy and advocacy efforts at all levels of government. The high-quality case management services that OLA provided Chapters will continue with PPA. A Manager of State Advocacy position was created to perform state and local policy and advocacy activities, and staff the Committee on Library Advocacy with the support of the PPA unit. Megan Cusick, previously the Grassroots Specialist in OLA, accepted the position and will continue to work from headquarters in Chicago as part of the PPA team.

### ADVOCACY OUTREACH

#### **AASL President advocates for school libraries in panel on Capitol Hill**

On May 9, AASL President and Norman (Okla.) Public Schools Director of Libraries and Instructional Technology Kathryn Roots Lewis participated in a congressional briefing to discuss the disastrous consequences on education, including school libraries, if the President's budget cuts to LSTA and Title II were adopted. The briefing was sponsored by a longtime ALA coalition partner, the Committee on Education Funding. In her remarks, Roots Lewis said, "Statewide databases for all Oklahomans including all school age learners are made possible in part by using LSTA funds." Pointing out the impact of Department of Education appropriations, she said, "School librarians champion the teaching role that is an integral part of their practice and benefit from Title II funds..., [which] are used to create a community of educators focused

on providing students with research experiences that allow learners to have voice and choice in their own learning while still mastering the articulated state standards.” In addition to her valuable voice in support of libraries, Roots Lewis’s voice contributed strategically to the coalition’s budget messaging as her congressional representative, Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK-4), is a member of the House Appropriations Committee.

### **ALA hosts library panel on libraries and child literacy on Capitol Hill**

On June 4, ALA hosted *Slide into Learning: Libraries Advance Literacy and Prevent the Summer Slide*, a panel discussion for members of Congress, their staff and other education policy stakeholders on Capitol Hill. The panel featured Elizabeth Rush, library specialist from Northside Independent School District (Tex.) Library Services; Jo Giudice, director of libraries for the City of Dallas; and Nawaid Ladak, legislative assistant in the office of Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX-30). Moderated by Liana Heitin Loewus, assistant managing editor of *Education Week*, the panel members examined how libraries supplement school curriculum, both in and out of the classroom, and discussed opportunities for robust partnerships with elected officials and community stakeholders. The luncheon event was well-attended by congressional staff, including several whose congress members serve on key committees.

### **ALA collaborates with New Hampshire libraries ahead of 2020 presidential primary**

As a new experimental initiative on national policy advocacy and its integration with state and local advocacy, ALA is exploring possibilities during the New Hampshire presidential primary in 2020. In May, PPA Senior Director Alan Inouye and Manager of Public Policy Megan Ortegon traveled to New Hampshire to meet with state library leaders to discuss potential opportunities for events and library messaging during the 2020 presidential primary. PPA staff met with State Librarian Michael York, New Hampshire Library Trustee Association Past President David Hallenbeck and Assistant State Librarian Lori Fisher, who is an ALA Chapter Councilor for New Hampshire and a member of the ALA Policy Corps. The group conducted several site visits, including to the Kilton Library, Baker Free Library, Bedford Public Library and Portsmouth Public Library, where they briefly met with the New England Library Association. Currently, the working group is conducting research on policy priorities, best points of contact within the various campaigns and related organizations who have had similar events. The group will share their findings and convene again during the ALA Annual Conference.

### **ALA explores Alaska for a potential in-district event**

In June, Manager of Public Policy Megan Ortegon traveled to Anchorage and Juneau, Alaska, and met with State Librarian Patience Frederiksen and Alaska Library Association President Robert Barr to explore possibilities for an ALA event with a federal lawmaker during the August recess. Like the 2018 Ohio in-district event with Rep. Marsha Fudge (OH-D-11), the 2019 event is part of a larger effort to strengthen the local-state-national connections in library advocacy as outlined in PPA’s strategic plan. The event will showcase services and programming Alaska’s libraries bring to their communities and cultivate library champions on the local, state and national level. Ortegon also conducted a series of site visits to investigate possible event venues.

### **ALA focuses on year-round advocacy at state and regional conferences**

On April 16, Associate Executive Director (PPA) Kathi Kromer participated alongside ALA President-elect Julius Jefferson, United for Libraries (UFL) President Skip Dye and Texas Library Association Past President and current Legislative Committee Chair Susan Mann in a panel “Local, State, and National Library Advocacy: A Grasstops Approach” at the Texas

Library Association conference. The session explored the difference between grassroots and grassroots advocates, how to identify them in communities and engage them to build key library advocates, cultivate allies, and develop constituencies in support of libraries at every level of government. Kromer and Assistant Director of Communications and Knowledge Management Emily Wagner joined the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC, April 17) for the Massachusetts Library Trustee Institute for all library trustees in Massachusetts, where they presented spoke on year-round relationship building and piloted a new Trustee library survey to be rolled out in early June. The day-long event focused on advocacy as an essential role of all library trustees.

### **PPA staff present on library policy priorities, issues in local and national events**

- PPA Senior Director Alan Inouye was featured in a [reddit Ask Me Anything](#)/politics session, where he answered questions about public policy, access to information and technology, with an emphasis on libraries. Inouye spoke on advancing inclusion in current policy trends at the monthly [meetup](#) of Digital Cultural Heritage DC (March 19), a group for people interested in collecting, preserving and making available digital cultural heritage information. He gave a talk, Library Leadership in Tumultuous Times, at the [Annual Meeting](#) of the Phi Beta Mu, Iota Chapter (May 1), which was held at ALA's office in Washington. At the Partnership for Progress on the Digital Divide 2019 [Annual Conference](#) (May 22) held at Georgetown University, Inouye gave a talk on "Diverse Directions for Dealing with the Digital Divide: A Window from Washington."
- Associate Director and Senior Policy Advocate Marijke Visser presented [\*Yes, and: When Internet Access is No Longer a Limiting Factor for Library Services\*](#) at Montana State University's education policy conference (April 12). Visser was also part of a round table hosted by [NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association](#)'s Foundation for Rural Service, "Rural Broadband and the Next Generation of American Jobs."
- Assistant Director of Government Relations Gavin Baker spoke about libraries and the 2020 Census with the National Coalition for Literacy board (May 9), Virginia Public Library Directors Association (April 11) and in a national [webinar](#) hosted by the Census Counts Campaign and Funders' Committee for Civic Participation (April 10), where he highlighted the ways libraries as community-based organizations can plan hiring outreach efforts for the 2020 Census.
- Assistant Directors of Communication Emily Wagner and Shawnda Hines spoke on libraries, advocacy and communications to Professor Ingrid Hsieh-Yee's students from Catholic University's [Department of Library and Information Science](#), who held their class at ALA's office in Washington in April.

### **ALA rolls out new resources for advocates**

Building on recent advocacy successes and with support from ALA President Loida Garcia-Febo, the PPA team introduced new resources for ALA members to cultivate relationships with their members of Congress and congressional staff. A tour of new advocacy tools on the revamped advocacy website was presented at the March 27 Chapter Advocacy Exchange, "[Advocacy Open House](#)." New resources include [one-page fact sheets](#) on IMLS funding information for each state; a state-level worksheets for advocates; a trustee survey; a [social media advocacy toolkit](#); a [checklist](#) for video storytelling and live streaming events; a "[How to Write a Letter to the Editor](#)" resource to accompany the video on telling your library story

to [local media](#); and a “[How to Organize a Congressional Visit](#)” instructions for arranging a congressional tour of your library to accompany the new video on how to [arrange a visit](#).

### **ALA launches online storytelling initiative during National Library Week**

As a part of National Library Week and ALA's ongoing advocacy work, PPA and CMO teamed up to launch the #MyLibraryMyStory [initiative](#), which aimed to highlight the ongoing work of libraries in the field. The team reached out to ALA advocates and encouraged them to create and share digital content about their libraries. The goal was to create a space for advocates to flex their storytelling muscles and generate visibility for libraries. The hashtag #MyLibraryMyStory was used nearly 2,200 times on Twitter during National Library Week and nearly 1,000 on Instagram.

### **ALA highlights state advocacy successes, supports local libraries**

ALA continues support for libraries at state and local level, focused primarily on censorship issues and school libraries, many of which are fighting elimination of certified librarians in districts throughout the country. Working together with the Office for Intellectual Freedom, the May Chapter Advocacy Exchange webinar “[#LibrariesStrong: library strong state ecosystems mobilized to defeat censorship](#)” showcased the work of Maine and Colorado library leaders, who successfully fought censorship legislation in their respective states. ALA also continues to offer direct support for school libraries facing specific challenges in several states. After successful [protests](#) against slated cutbacks that would have reduced to part-time 24 middle and high-school librarians in Seattle, Washington, the positions were reinstated. ALA President Garcia-Febo and AASL President Roots Lewis sent a letter of thanks to Seattle Public Schools officials for restoring librarian positions in the district. ALA continues to work with the Washington Library Association on a systemic solution to cuts in other districts around the state. Among other ways ALA has provided support for specific libraries is through a letter submitted by ALA President Loida Garcia-Febo and PLA President Monique leConge Ziesenhenné in support of the staff and board of Maury Loontjens Memorial Library in Narragansett, Rhode Island, and their efforts to proceed with a long-planned and voter-approved building project.

### **ALA, PLA initiative continues to award micro-funding to local libraries across America**

Since the kick-off in January of this year the [Libraries Lead with Digital Skills](#) initiative has awarded \$1000 grants to libraries in PA, CT, OH, MD, VA, NM to hold workshops for job seekers, small businesses, and entrepreneurs using their own and Grow with Google resources. Projects cover basic digital literacy skills training and go beyond the basics. The Wicomico (Md.) Public Libraries Downtown Branch, for example, is hosting a one-day workshop designed to connect developmentally challenged adults to resume building skills and job search option. Other libraries will be building partnerships with job centers or economic development councils such as the Chesapeake (Va.) Public Library which will be working with Roads Workforce Council to provide a one-day event focused on transitioning military, veterans, and military spouses who are job seekers.

### **ALA Policy Corps II meets, progress report to be released**

The [second cohort](#) of ALA Policy Corps members met in Washington, D.C., during National Library Week for two days of intensive training. The workshop included behind-the-scenes looks at policymaking on federal funding for libraries, net neutrality, and the 2020 Census, as well as meeting with key ALA partners in Washington. Members of the first cohort are continuing to engage in areas of specific policy interest with PPA, with some having presented at the ALA Midwinter and Annual conferences and the ACRL conference. Members across both cohorts will

meet in Washington, D.C., in 2019 to further expand their networks, continue learning, and share expertise. A short report sharing an assessment of work to date, along with key learnings and plans for future development is in final review and will be released in advance of the ALA Annual Conference. As of June 2019, there are 22 total Corps members across library types, plus one Policy Corps Fellow. Corps members make a five-year commitment, and the intent is to have at least 50 active members in place at the end of the first phase of the initiative. In their year-end evaluation, the first cohort of Corps members identified these program aspects as most valuable: peer networking and learning, deep dives on policy areas and processes—including complexities and coalitions, direct interactions with policymakers and advocates, and media training.

### **ALA issues new resource on libraries and healthcare**

ALA released a new white paper in the ALA Policy Perspectives series, *Healthier Communities: Libraries improve health literacy, access*. Citing the shifting health landscape and the role that libraries play in access to health information, the 18-page brief argues that library leaders will need to take the initiative and make the case to decision makers—speaking in their language to explain how libraries represent cost-effective means for addressing the community’s critical health care challenges.

## FEDERAL LEGISLATION AND POLICY UPDATES

### **FEDERAL LIBRARY FUNDING AND PROGRAMS**

#### **House Committee provides increase for LSTA, IAL**

Following the work of ALA advocates during the Dear Appropriator letter campaign, ALA submitted comments to the House Appropriations Committee urging the committee to approve increases for LSTA and IAL program. The House Appropriations Committee approved increases to the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) programs. The House Committee provided a \$17 million increase for LSTA, all dedicated to the Grants to States program. The increase meets the amount needed to launch a new funding formula provided in last year’s LSTA [reauthorization bill](#). The new formula would raise the minimum funding level for each state to \$1 million, which will benefit smaller states while ensuring larger states will not lose funding. The IAL program received a \$2 million increase in the House bill. While the full House is working to move all its appropriations bills before the July 4 recess, the Senate is on a slower track and may not start moving any bills before mid-June. Senate funding bills are expected to recommend cuts to many education and library programs, though not call for elimination as the [president’s budget](#) recommended. House and Senate leadership is discussing a possible budget deal that will avoid substantial mandatory cuts to domestic and defense programs, and which the president will sign. We expect negotiations to continue through the summer as leaders seek to avoid a government shutdown in the fall. In the meantime, Public Policy and Advocacy is working closely with Chapter Relations to recruit and equip member leaders in strategic locations. ALA held a series of conference calls in targeted states to advocate support for LSTA and IAL funding in print media. One success is a [letter to the editor](#) published in the Bangor Daily News written by Maine Library Association Legislative Chair Sonya Durney, whose Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) serves on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

## **GOVERNMENT INFORMATION**

### **ALA highlights libraries at U.S. Census Bureau press conference, files amicus briefing on Supreme Court citizenship question**

On April 1, Census Day, ALA President Loida Garcia-Febo participated in a [press conference](#) held by the U.S. Census Bureau at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., along with three top leaders of the Bureau, the president of The Annie E. Casey Foundation and governor of the Chickasaw Nation. ALA President Loida Garcia-Febo focused her remarks on libraries' critical role of achieving a fair and accurate count in the Census, pointing out that "99 percent of hard-to-count areas are located within five miles of a public library." The same day, ALA also [joined an amicus brief](#) to the U.S. Supreme Court opposing the last-minute addition of a citizenship question to the 2020 Census. With the American Statistical Association, American Sociological Association, and the Population Association of America, ALA filed in support of the plaintiffs in *Department of Commerce v. New York*. The case was appealed directly to the Supreme Court after a federal court [ruled](#) for the plaintiffs and ordered the Commerce Department to remove the question. Arguments in the case were heard April 23, and the Supreme Court is expected to rule before June 2019, when census forms are scheduled to go to press. On May 16, ALA released the [Libraries' Guide to the 2020 Census](#), a new resource which includes background about the Census and information about how libraries can get involved. Members can stay up-to-date with all things related to libraries and the Census by [subscribing to ALA's new e-newsletter](#) and visiting ALA's 2020 Census page at [www.ala.org/census](http://www.ala.org/census).

## **TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

### **ALA supports new Digital Equity Act**

ALA welcomed the introduction of the Digital Equity Act of 2019 by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) in April. The bill, if passed, would establish two grant programs: first, a capacity building grant for states to increase digital inclusion efforts identified through a state-specific Digital Equity Plan and second, a national competitive grant program open to individual groups, coalitions and communities. The bill also includes a focus on research and evaluation of the projects awarded by the programs. Libraries have long been committed to digital inclusion and lead the way on programs that meet the needs of learners at all stages, including those less likely to be online. ALA joined a new coalition of organizations in the early stages of strategy planning to secure nine additional co-sponsors of the bill.

## **COPYRIGHT POLICY**

### **ALA honors retired ARL Associate Executive Director Prue Adler**

ALA participated in a half-day [event](#), "The Power of Coalitions: A Forum on Public Interest Intellectual Property Advocacy Honoring Prudence S. Adler" held by the American University's Program on Information Justice and Intellectual Property. Held on April 17, the forum highlighted the long journey of copyright law over the last three decades of technological change and the role of the Association of Research Libraries' (ARL) Prue Adler as "the glue that has held this community together." Former ARL Associate Executive Director Adler retired after 30 years of service to higher education and academic and research libraries. Throughout her esteemed career, Adler successfully advocated for the public interest and mentored many individuals, who follow in her footsteps.

### **CopyTalk webinars continue**

Monthly [CopyTalk webinars](#) hosted by PPA Carrie Russell continue to draw participants, examining a range of copyright topics. The May CopyTalk featured Dr. Kyra Folk-Farber, who



summarized the new Music Modernization Act of 2018, explaining what has changed regarding access to pre-1972 sound recordings. For the May CopyTalk, Ty Turley-Trejo explained Section 110(1) of the Copyright Act – the "classroom exception" – and how it applies to libraries. The CopyTalk webinar series is sponsored by ALA's Copyright, Legislation, Advocacy, and Education (CLEAN) committee.

## **OTHER POLICY ISSUES**

PPA speaks on behalf of ALA members on policy and legislation at every level of government. The following list includes a sampling of congressional testimony, comments filed with federal agencies and coalition letters which ALA has endorsed with its name, a coveted asset among allies and coalition partners from across the political spectrum:

- [Letter](#) to the U.S. Census Bureau (March 19) recommending best practices for the U.S. Census Bureau to consider for potential Questionnaire Assistance Centers.
- [Coalition letter](#) with the [Lincoln Network](#) and others to the House Appropriations Committee leaders (March 25) requesting additional funding for the legislative branch in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 to restore infrastructure, modernize congressional records and expand work on science and technology policy
- [Amicus Curiae brief](#) in *Department of Commerce v. State of New York* (April 2) opposing the inclusion of a citizenship question in the 2020 Census, arguing it would impact the accuracy of data
- [Testimony](#) to House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees (April 2 and May 3, respectively) requesting additional federal funding for the Library of Congress and the Government Publishing Office (GPO) for FY 2020
- [Coalition letters](#) to House leadership and the full House of Representatives (April 2 and May 22, respectively) in support of the Save the Internet Act (April 2) to restore network neutrality to better protect communications rights, small business innovation and free speech online
- [Coalition letter](#) with The Census Project allies to the leadership of House and Senate Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations subcommittees (May 1) urging their approval of \$8.45 billion for the U.S. Census Bureau in FY 2020, including at least \$7.58 billion in direct funding for 2020 census operations
- [Notice of Ex Parte](#) to the FCC (May 1) concerning the licensing and use policies for the Educational Broadband Service spectrum, including support for the preservation of the current standards for educational and public interest use
- [Testimony](#) to the Senate Commerce Appropriations Subcommittee (May 10) advocating for funding for the U.S. Census Bureau in order to properly conduct the 2020 census.
- [Coalition letter](#) with [Demand Progress](#) and others to House Democratic leadership (May 22) opposing the creation of a "working group" which, if implemented, would take the place of the Save the Internet Act and would likely decrease the chance of restoring online protections to users
- [Coalition letter](#) with Demand Progress and others to the Senate Committee on Appropriations (May 9) urging the Senate to provide funding for the Office of Technology Assessment in FY2020.
- [Coalition letter](#) to the House and Senate Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Subcommittees (April 25) expressing support for the Community Development Block Grant Program in the form of \$3.8 billion in formula funding for the program in FY 2020