

EBD #12.20
2018-2019

TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: Public Policy and Advocacy Office Report

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:

No action requested

CONTACT PERSON:

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DATE: March 18, 2019

BACKGROUND:

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

ATTACHMENTS:

Public Policy and Advocacy Office Report

ALA PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY OFFICE REPORT

PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY OFFICE NEWS

ALA supports libraries in the field

In early December, Associate Executive Director Kathi Kromer and Public Policy Manager Megan Ortegon attended the tenth library opening of the Loudoun County Public Library (LCPL), at the invitation of LCPL board chair Mark Miller. They were present for the ribbon cutting, toured the facilities and got a hands-on experience with the library's maker center.

Committee on Legislation (COL) convenes priority agenda at retreat

At Midwinter 2019 in Seattle, COL approved a legislative agenda to strengthen and guide ALA's advocacy efforts through the first year of the 116th Congress. COL's agenda reflects current political opportunities that will have the greatest impact on libraries, including: funding; equitable access to high-speed internet; copyright; government information and services; and emerging policy issues.

ADVOCACY OUTREACH

Public Policy and Advocacy Unit hosts first Congressional Fly-In 2019

On February 25-26, the ALA Public policy and Advocacy Unit welcomed around 100 attendees to Washington, D.C. for the first [Congressional Fly-In](#). Unlike National Library Legislative Day, the Fly-In was a smaller more strategic event held at the onset of the FY2020 appropriations cycle to raise awareness and garner support amongst members of Congress and their staff for federal library funding priorities. The Fly-In is part of ALA's strategy to engage members of Congress in different points throughout the appropriations process.

Attendees were chosen based on target congressional districts, experience and established relationships with elected officials. Among the attendees were seasoned advocates including leadership of chapters, state, public, school and university libraries, friend groups, library trustees, board and Policy Corps, Corporate Committee for Library Investment (CCLI), COL members and state librarians from all over the country. Participants were asked to focus on three strategic asks: ask members of Congress to fund the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) at the \$232 million reauthorized level; sign the LSTA "Dear Appropriator" letter; and visit a library in their district to learn about all the important services it provides to the community.

The training day included presentations from Brad Fitch (Congressional Management Foundation), Brian Jones and Charlotte McCoy (Black Rock Group) and John Windmueller (Washington Improv Theater). Speakers included ALA President Loida Garcia-Febo and Hon. Mignon Clyburn, a current fellow with Open Society Foundations and former Commissioner and Acting Chair, Federal Communications Commission whose speech was shared on [Facebook Live](#). Several members of CCLI, including Steve Potash (Rakuten OverDrive), Skip Dye (Penguin Random House) and Paul Gazzolo (Gale Cengage) participated in a panel moderated by Mark Vieth (CDR Associates). Participants were also updated in the year's key legislative issues by D'Arcy Philips (Penn Hill Group) and Kathi Kromer (ALA Public Policy and Advocacy Unit), moderated by Robert Banks (ALA COL).

On Tuesday, advocates made their way to the Hill for over 200 targeted congressional meetings. Since the event, the LSTA gained a new republican co-sponsor acquiring bipartisan support and in the week that followed the event, attendees followed up with the staff they meet with regarding requesting their member of Congress sign on to the LSTA “Dear Appropriator” letter.

ALA spreads love for libraries on Capitol Hill

On February 14, the ALA Public Policy and Advocacy Unit partnered with D.C. Public Library to host the first [Capitol Library Card Sign-Up Day](#). Library workers from D.C. Public Library conducted over 120 on-site library card sign ups and checked out over 20 books. A representative from Rakuten OverDrive was also in attendance to walk participants through online e-book and audiobook services. Attendees included Rep. Mark Takano (CA-41), congressional staff, and other Capitol Hill employees. The event was also featured in print *Roll Call* (a Hill newspaper delivered daily to all members of Congress and Hill employees). The Capitol Library Card Sign-Up Day was part of a larger ALA effort focusing on year-round advocacy and was an effort to further introduce new members and re-educate returning members and their staff about the important services which are available at their local library.

ALA “Challenges” Congress to Support Libraries

In February, the ALA Public Policy and Advocacy Unit partnered with D.C. Public Library and Hartford County Public Library to create and deliver to Capitol Hill more than 535 of the first-ever library challenge coins. Challenge coins are common on Capitol Hill and are traditionally used and traded among members of Congress and other government agencies. To introduce new members and re-educate returning members about library services, ALA participated in the coin tradition and created the first 3D printed and laser cut challenge coin using technology available in library makerspaces. The coins had the traditional library emblem 3D printed on one side and the ALA logo laser cut on wood on the back with the phrase “Support Our Nations Libraries.” The coins were hand delivered to every congressional office with an accompanying one pager describing ALA’s library policy priorities.

ALA adds second cohort of Policy Corps members

The ALA [announced](#) its second group of Policy Corps members on January 23, 2019. The new members again from across the country and from K-12 school, academic and public library backgrounds, and will join the first cohort who continue working on national policy advocacy. ALA drew a strong pool of applicants, which a subcommittee of the Policy Corps working group made their selections. The new members will meet in Washington, D.C., during National Library Week (April 8-10) for their first face-to-face training event.

ALA reaches more libraries through Ready to Code, expands Google collaboration

Building on the strong partnership between ALA’s Public Policy and Advocacy Office and Google, the \$1 million Libraries Lead with Digital Skills initiative [announced](#) in November [launched](#) at the end of January with their 50-state tour [kick-off](#) at the Philadelphia Free Library. Since then, the Grow with Google team has visited Connecticut, Maryland and Virginia, with next tour stops planned for Ohio, New Mexico, and Iowa. The tours focus on building digital skills for adults and highlighting what libraries do to support workforce development and economic opportunity in their communities. Following each state tour, PLA is opening [microfunding](#) applications to local public libraries that are working to develop digital skills. To support outreach in each state, the Public Policy and Advocacy team is collaborating with the Chief Offices of State Library Agencies (COSLA) and providing

materials and regular updates. The team is also collaborating with Chapter Relations to equip state associations to promote the microfunding opportunities in their states.

ALA engages librarians to advocate on the 2020 Census

With the 2020 Census less than a year away, ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy team and the [2020 Census Library Outreach and Education Task Force](#) are continuing their efforts to ensure libraries are well-prepared. In January, Gavin Baker and Larra Clark contributed to a blog post to *The Scoop* with ideas to [help libraries prepare for potential activities and demands](#) that may raise from the Census. During Midwinter, the team organized a panel about library advocacy and community engagement in the 2020 Census, including a discussion about philanthropic resources. In February, the conversation moved online with a [Chapter Advocacy Exchange webinar](#) discussing the advocacy efforts by libraries in several states. In addition, the team continued to lead national advocacy for a fair and accurate Census. In February, Congress completed work on the Census Bureau's budget for 2019 and included [provisions that ALA had sought](#) directing the Census Bureau to open local outreach sites in communities across the country, which could potentially be located in libraries. ALA is [continuing to advocate](#) for effective implementation of that provision. ALA is closely monitoring the litigation challenging the addition of an untested citizenship question to the 2020 Census. ALA has [opposed](#) the addition of a citizenship question with the following public statement: "Adding a citizenship question to the 2020 Census would suppress Census response, distorting the statistics and making them less informative." The Supreme Court will hear the case in April, with a final ruling expected this summer.

ALA focuses on year-round advocacy at state conferences

Associate Executive Director Kathi Kromer attended Florida's legislative conference, where she spoke with the Florida Library Association's board and with State Library and Archives staff about planning for advocacy. Attendees received an introduction to the congressional calendar, tips for building a legislator profile and discussed how they could become engaged in ALA's year-round advocacy program. She met with Gale Etschmaier, dean of Libraries at Florida State University (FSU), and her team and toured FSU's libraries. Kathi spent time with Faye Watkins, dean of Libraries at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and met with the team at the Florida Academic Library Services Cooperative. She also visited the LeRoy Collins Leon County Main Library in Tallahassee, and libraries in Wakulla County, Franklin County and Apalachicola, where Hurricane Michael went through in 2018.

Presentation at the intersection of policy and digital cultural heritage

On March 19, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy Alan Inouye accepted an invitation from the Digital Cultural Heritage to present a talk entitled: "Working Towards Inclusive Communities & Collections." He was joined by Effie Kapsalis, senior digital program officer at the Smithsonian who spoke about the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative, and Doretha Williams, the smith fund program manager at the National Museum of African American History & Culture, who shared information about the museum's Community Curation Project.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION AND POLICY UPDATES

FEDERAL LIBRARY FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

Delayed appropriations campaign kicks off; president again targets libraries

Federal funding for libraries were again targeted for elimination in the [White House budget](#) request to Congress, threatening more than \$210 million in resources for libraries. The budget request—submitted more than a month late due to the unprecedented 35-day government shutdown—recommends (for the third year in a row) elimination of LSTA, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Innovative Approaches to Literacy, Title IV-A, Striving Readers, and many other programs. While disappointing, this news was expected by ALA’s Public Policy and Advocacy Office, which has been preparing for this inevitability over the past several months. Fortunately, Congress controls federal spending levels, not the White House, and the ALA Fly-In was well timed to coincide with the budget release. Congress has rejected the previous two White House budget requests to eliminate library funding, behind the intense work by library advocates.

ALA launched its [nationwide engagement](#) to fund libraries on the same day as the budget was released by the White House. Within the first 24 hours, nearly every Representative in Congress heard from library advocates from their district calling for Representatives to sign the Dear Appropriator letters. In the House, both letters supporting LSTA and IAL were led by Democrats and Republicans. The Senate deadline for Dear Appropriator letters had not been announced at press time.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Supreme Court to hear net neutrality case; Congress introduces legislation

On February 1, a three-judge panel of the US Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit heard oral arguments about whether the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) was arbitrary and capricious in reversing its 2015 order, which included rules against blocking, throttling or paid prioritization of internet access. ALA filed amicus with the plaintiffs in the case. An appeals court ruling is expected by summer 2019, but this decision is expected to be appealed on to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Congress also took up the issue with 2019s first net neutrality hearing on February 7 in the House. Since then, three republican-sponsored bills have been introduced into the House and one bicameral democratic bill has been announced. Only the democrats’ “Save the Internet Act” would reinstate the protections previously in place under the 2015 FCC Order. ALA joined other net neutrality advocates in [encouraging people](#) to tweet, email and call members of Congress to support passage of the Act.

OTHER FEDERAL LEGISLATION

National Deaf History Awareness Month

Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-3-OH) asked ALA to [endorse](#) a proposed congressional resolution to make April National Deaf History Awareness Month. ALA Council had a [resolution](#) in 2005. ALA applauded the Congresswoman’s efforts, stating: “Equitable access to information is a core value of all librarians, who develop their collections with particular attention to the needs of persons with disabilities, including those who are deaf.”

OFFICE OF LIBRARY ADVOCACY

Advocacy team provides ongoing support to libraries in the field

Between January 1 and March 15, the Office for Library Advocacy (OLA) received 22 new inquiries and continued work on 12 previous inquiries. With new legislative sessions across the country, a significant number of new inquiries were related to state bills. One trend OLA is seeing is legislative attempts to censor materials and programs in both school and public libraries. A particularly troubling development is that some of these bills would permit criminal charges to be filed against librarians for perceived violations. OLA is closely with the Office for Intellectual Freedom to monitor these bills and provide support to our state level colleagues. OLA is seeing other legislative concerns around the defined status of school librarians in state education code; specifically, whether they are recognized as teachers. With school budget season underway, OLA is working with librarians whose districts propose to eliminate certified librarian positions, working in close coordination with AASL on school library concerns.