

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: Friday, March 26, 2021

BACKGROUND:

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

ATTACHMENTS:

Public Policy and Advocacy Report

ALA PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY (PPA) OFFICE REPORT

RECORD INCREASES IN FEDERAL FUNDING FOR LIBRARIES

ALA leads successful campaign to include billions for America's libraries in American Rescue Plan Act

The largest spending bill ever approved by Congress, the \$1.9 trillion-dollar [American Rescue Plan Act](#) (ARPA), included unprecedented levels of direct and indirect funding for libraries. PPA staff worked tirelessly for months to make these funding streams become a reality.

Relief funding for IMLS:

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 (using the Grants to States formula after a [\\$2 million state minimum](#) and \$200,000 minimum for territories). IMLS is currently working with state library agencies to provide guidance on allowable uses of funding available to states. The intent of Congress was for this funding to be as flexible as possible to allow each state and territory the freedom to address its individual library needs.

Relief funding for local governments:

Finally, the rescue legislation provides [billions of dollars in library-eligible funding](#), with more than \$360 billion going to state, local and tribal governments. States and local governments will decide how to spend their piece of the \$360 billion pie. To receive library-eligible funding outside of IMLS, ALA members must advocate at the state and local level. The best way to secure funding outside IMLS will be to partner with local governments, school administrators, and other community service organizations. ALA is exploring opportunities for libraries to leverage state and local ARPA resources and will provide guidance to chapters next week on how to tap into federal funds.

On March 25, a team of PPA staff met with AASL leadership to present information on ARPA and its implications for school libraries. The session was an opportunity for PPA staff and consultants to provide in-depth analysis of the legislation, highlight funding opportunities for school libraries, lead brainstorming and develop messaging for local advocacy to position school libraries to access the billions of dollars in relief funding available.

Relief funding to connect Americans:

ARPA also provided more than \$7 billion for 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 brand new program, and ALA is providing input during the rulemaking process, which must be developed by the FCC within 60 days of the bill's passage.

Another program funded through ARPA aimed at addressing the digital divide, the [Emergency Broadband Benefit Program](#), provides subsidies to low-income households for internet connectivity and devices. PPA submitted comments to the FCC to highlight how libraries provide the public with resources and outreach materials and could help connect eligible patrons to the new program. 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. PPA's Marijke Visser joined a panel presentation for media outlet Broadband Breakfast, [The Emergency Broadband Benefit: What's Included, and How Will the \\$3.2 Billion Program Work](#), to talk about the outreach role of libraries.

Build America's Libraries Act

Outreach to members of Congress, allies and library advocates on the Build America's Libraries Act has been a full court press in 2021. PPA staff have launched and regularly add content to the legislation's [advocacy landing page](#). From here, 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, advocates can easily get just-in-time information about co-sponsors and quickly contact their members to thank them or to encourage them to join as a co-sponsor. As of March 25, the bill has bicameral support with 12 Senate co-sponsors and 80 bipartisan House co-sponsors. PLA Deputy Director and ALA Deputy Director of Policy Larra Clark and ALA Deputy Director of Policy and Government Relations Gavin Baker have held briefings with ALA and PLA board leaders, the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, state library chapters and United for Libraries. All briefings were well-attended and participants highly engaged. Staff also are working to increase visibility in media outlets with letters to the editor and op-eds, particularly in newspapers located in the districts of key committee members. PPA is 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.

DEVELOPMENTS IN PUBLIC POLICY

PPA supports reintroduced broadband legislation, E-rate expansion

broadband in Congress and at the FCC shows no sign of diminishing in 2021 beginning with the reintroduction of two bills that ALA supported in the last congress. Senators Manchin and Collins reintroduced the [HOTSPOTS Act](#) and were joined by Sens King, Warner, Murkowski, Cornyn, Boozman, Tester, and Crapo. Congressman Clyburn, House Majority Whip and chair of the Rural Broadband Caucus and Senator Klobuchar reintroduced the [Accessible Affordable Internet for All Act](#), comprehensive legislation that includes funding for digital inclusion programs as well as for broadband deployment.

ALA also joined a [petition](#) with our coalition partner, the Schools Health Library Broadband Coalition, requesting the FCC open a proceeding to allow E-rate funding to be used to help connect students and library patrons who lack home internet access. PPA filed additional [comments](#) with the FCC raising issues specific to libraries and encouraging the Commission to include all library patrons and not only students who are on the wrong side of the digital divide. ALA is also a member of the Edlinc Coalition, which also filed comments. With the passage of ARPA and the inclusion of \$7.172 billion for this purpose, we are now tuning our attention to providing input on how the FCC should implement this new program.

Census data literacy

The Public Policy and Advocacy office is partnering with the Public Library Association (PLA) to launch a new project on [Census Data Literacy](#). The project builds on more than two years of advocacy for a complete and inclusive count in the 2020 Census and will continue to engage U.S. Census Bureau staff with libraries. It will promote awareness and use of community-level Census data and build the data literacy skills of library staff, which will enhance their services and programs. The data literacy skills embedded in this project will help libraries and communities move forward in efforts to recover from

the pandemic and also to reckon with the past, as legacies of racism and exclusion can be uncovered through research using the Census. The [first webinar](#) in the series of six, “Data that Counts: An Introduction to Census Data for Public Libraries” takes place April 6, 2021, at 1 p.m. CDT.

eBook advocacy continues on multiple fronts

ALA continues eBook advocacy at the national level and supporting efforts at the state level. Both ALA representatives and librarians from around the country contributed to media stories (e.g., in the [Washington Post](#)) protesting the Amazon digital book embargo of libraries. This public pressure is helping the House Judiciary Committee to consider legislation on this issue.

In Maryland, legislation on electronic book licenses for libraries is on the move (S.B. 432). This bill enjoyed multiple unanimous votes in favor as it progressed in the General Assembly before hitting [opposition by the Association of American Publishers](#). ALA is providing assistance to the Maryland Library Association on this advocacy effort.

In the matter of the Penguin Random House acquisition of Simon & Schuster, ALA representatives met with officials from the U.S. Department of Justice to discuss library interests and perspectives. Also, the Panorama Project released its “Immersive Media & Books 2020” study that provides data on use and perceptions of varied forms of media. This study includes helpful data of relevance to libraries. ALA is a member of the advisory council and research study committee of the Panorama Project.

ADVOCACY OUTREACH

PPA brings members of Congress, other dynamic guests during ALA Midwinter Meeting & Exhibits

With the 2020 elections bringing sweeping changes to Washington and many state capitals, PPA office hosted special guests during ALA’s Midwinter Meeting. In [an exclusive interview](#) held days after the Capitol riots in January, U.S. Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) spoke with ALA President Julius C. Jefferson, Jr., about the effects of the pandemic on the nation, his love for libraries and prospects for libraries in the new Congress. Reed encouraged ALA members to cultivate more library champions by deepening relationships with their elected leaders at every level of government.

PPA also hosted a pair of sessions highlighting opportunities and challenges for libraries in the 117th Congress. The first session, *New Directions from State and Federal Policy Makers: Maximize your Influence*, featured a range of dynamic speakers, including a national education journalist (Lauren Camera, US News & World Report), an education and budget policy expert (Sarah Abernathy, Committee for Education Funding), a government relations and advocacy professional (Briana McNamee, New York Library Association) and ALA Senior Director of Public Policy and Government Relations Alan Inouye. Moderated by ALA Committee on Legislation Chair Joe Thompson (Carroll County Public Library), the session addressed what to expect on the education, appropriations, and budget priorities for library advocates in Washington and in the state capitals.

The centerpiece of the second session, *Navigating Advocacy in a Virtual World*, was a [recorded virtual library tour](#) of Clinton-Macomb (Mich.) Public Library, led by library director and ALA executive board member Larry Neal for U.S. Representative Andy Levin (D-MI-9). In a conversation moderated by ALA Committee on Library Advocacy Chair Justin de la Cruz, Larry Neal and Rep. Levin’s Senior Legislative Assistant Courtney Laudick shared insight and tips on how library advocates can work with legislative

offices even during a pandemic. During the session PPA introduced a new resource for advocates, [How to Conduct a Virtual Library Tour](#).

PPA interviews Rep. Andy Levin for American Libraries podcast

In a special bonus episode of American Libraries' podcast Call Number, PPA Assistant Director of Communications Shawnda Hines interviewed Rep. Andy Levin (D-MI-9). The 20-minute conversation took place within days of Congress passing the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which included \$200 million in relief funding for libraries. The newest champion for libraries in Congress, in 2020 Rep. Levin worked with Sen. Jack Reed to rally Congress to include \$50 million in emergency relief funding for libraries in the CARES Act. Months later, they introduced the \$2 billion dollar Library Stabilization Fund Act. In February Rep. Levin introduced the House version of Sen. Reed's Build America's Libraries Act (see below). In his March 10 interview Rep. Levin discussed his love of libraries, commitment to standing up for them and how to best advocate for libraries at every level of government.

ALA supports new ATALM initiative, participates in Tribal Library Summit

With funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM) is launching [Sustaining and Advancing Indigenous Cultures](#), a strategic planning initiative to develop a unified approach to strengthening indigenous cultural institutions. PPA's Marijke Visser is serving on the national planning committee and co-moderated one of the focus groups during the March 9 [Tribal Library Summit](#). The goal of the Tribal Library Summit is to establish a sustainable structure that will improve library services to Native peoples. The Summit featured a keynote by Crosby Kemper, Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services; a preview of 2021 tribal library survey data; breakout sessions focusing on capacity building, funding, and program; and brainstorming sessions to discuss the needs, trends, and future of tribal libraries. The discussions will contribute to the development of a prioritized action plan.

Libraries Build Business (LBB) cohort continues implementation of small business and entrepreneur development programs

With most programs being offered virtually or with other modifications due to COVID-19, the LBB cohort and project staff are working toward their goals of building local capacity, identifying, and capturing promising practices and disseminating project resources to the field. The cohort's bi-weekly meetings continue to offering peer learning and support, as well professional development opportunities through guest presenters and experts. In January, project consultants from the Cicero group provided insight on running focus groups in their library and PPA Assistant Director of Communications, Shawnda Hines, led a workshop on crafting and delivering an elevator speech. With ongoing guidance from Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion consultant LaKeshia Kimbrough, the cohort is working to fully integrate EDI into the project goals and activities.

The LBB project team also began efforts toward scaling and expanding the peer learning network. In January, to coincide with the Midwinter Conference, the project leaders opened an LBB Community Slack discussion board to invite new participants share resources and join the discussion group. The LBB project time will continue to cultivate the Slack community throughout the year, adding new members, and building capacity in cohort members as co-managers and peer leaders.

During the Midwinter Conference, the Libraries Build Business project offered one session: [Libraries Build Business Midwinter Lunch & Learn](#). This was a pre-recorded session and was available continuously throughout the conference. Many members of the LBB cohort participated in developing and recording the session. In addition to the pre-recorded session, LBB hosted a mixer for people to come and meet

the cohort. This was a great success, and we were able to connect with individuals interested in the initiative and small business programming in their libraries.

The LBB program has pursued a variety of opportunities to share information about the program, including:

- Monthly Instagram Live Q&As with cohort members, recently featuring [Chris Bourret from Providence Public Library](#), [Sheldon Burke of Broward County Public Library](#) and [Julie Brophy of Baltimore County Public Library](#)
- A webinar to the New Jersey librarians, hosted by the NJ State Library: [Open to Change: Libraries, Small Businesses, and the COVID Crisis](#)
- A RUSA BRASS Webinar: [Libraries Build Business: Overview and Project Update](#)
- National Entrepreneurship Week tweets ([one example](#))
- [An International Women's Day Twitter chat](#)
- A co-authored op-ed with Baltimore County Public Library, "[From business idea to business plan: Baltimore Library 'Entrepreneur Academy' can help get you there](#)" published in the *Baltimore Sun* (co-authors Natalie Edington and Alan Inouye).

As part of Phase Two of the project, LBB cohort members will offer coaching and mentoring, starting in summer 2021. In addition, the project team has begun development of the program's playbook, which will include initiative learnings and promising practices to share with the field. The goals of phase two include scaling the peer learning network and providing resources and support to the field. Data collection is in progress through the evaluation framework and tools collaboratively created by Cicero Group and the LBB cohort.

ALA deepens collaboration on civic engagement

On the heels of a successful partnership with National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) over two years, ALA became an official partner of NVRD's parent organization, [NonProfit Vote](#), a consortium of state and national nonprofit organizations that promote nonpartisan voter and civic engagement activities. ALA also met with Local Democracy Initiative staff at the National League of Cities to explore opportunities for post-election collaboration around civic engagement.

PPA promotes advocacy tools with CRO to enhance ALA chapter advocacy

In collaboration with the Chapter Relations Office (CRO), PPA co-hosted a Chapter Advocacy Exchange in January, [Planning Your Virtual Legislative Day](#). In addition, CRO, PPA, and CQ Fiscal Note (our grassroots software vendor) hosted three "Engage Office Hours" sessions—one each in January, February and March—for state administrators of the Engage advocacy software that ALA makes available to each of its state chapters at no cost. Assistant Director for State Advocacy Megan Cusick also presented on ALA's state and local advocacy support and state legislative advocacy at CRO's Chapter Leaders Orientation in January and Chapter Leaders Forum in early February.

PPA co-presented two advocacy trainings with the New York Library Association: in January, "New Year, New Legislation;" and in March, "From your Hometown to the Capitol." In early March, PPA conducted Advocacy Academy for the Maine Library Association as part of its month-long virtual advocacy event. PPA staff also assisted with planning for the March ALA Connect Live, "Leveraging Partnerships with Chapters."

ALA supports advocacy, state legislative activity

PPA coordinates ALA support for state legislative advocacy in collaboration with Chapter Relations Office, Office for Intellectual Freedom, and ALA units. In addition, PPA works with state chapters on specific federal legislation that impacts state and local funding or operations, such as coordinating library support for [inclusion of special districts](#) in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

PPA collected and shared a summary of state legislative priorities with chapter leaders and state legislative chairs. For 2021, in addition to COVID recovery, top issues track closely to previous years and include funding, school libraries, and shared resources.

Legislative sessions are still underway in most states. This has been a particularly challenging year for state associations confronting model bills related to filtering technologies and elimination of “harmful to minors” exemptions for public and/or school librarians. OIF and PPA are working together to assist a number of states in these efforts. (Please see PPA and OIF’s joint confidential report to the Executive Board.) PPA has also consulted with several states about inclusion of libraries in broadband legislation, as well as a number of other bills that impact libraries, library worker, or library patrons.

Since mid-January, PPA has assisted local advocates in states including Wyoming, Tennessee, Texas, Louisiana, Kentucky, Connecticut on a range of issues from governance to school library positions. PPA submitted a [joint letter](#) on behalf of ALA President Julius Jefferson and AASL President Kathy Carroll to Ellington, CT, Public Schools.

Committee on Library Advocacy (COLA)

COLA reviewed and endorsed two Council resolutions prior to their presentation at Midwinter: “in Support of Broadband as a Human Right” and “in Opposition to Facial Recognition Software in Libraries.” COLA was one of three committees that was represented on the Vaccine Working Group. (See separate report.) PPA’s Shawnda Hines conducted an hourlong op-ed writing workshop for COLA members; and an ad hoc group was formed to develop a school library advocacy tool.

COLA’s Ecosystem Subcommittee continues its outreach to states—with ecosystem efforts launched in Tennessee, Michigan, and Oklahoma—and has contacted ALA divisions to ensure that leaders across ALA are aware of the One Voice Toolkit and its applications within the association. The subcommittee also met with COSLA leadership to explore opportunities to partner together on state implementation.

PPA staff provides advocacy communications training to ALA members

In alignment with the ALA pivot strategy for increasing meaningful membership engagement opportunities, PPA communications staff created new resources and led several workshops to broaden advocate skills:

- **Crafting an elevator speech, January 28:** PPA Assistant Director of Communications Shawnda Hines led a workshop on crafting and delivering an elevator speech for the Libraries Build Business cohort. Designed to support leaders in deepening engagement of stakeholders and various audiences, the workshop outlined a plan to concisely describe their entrepreneurship programs so as to move listeners from the information stage to involvement. The workshop provided opportunity for participants to practice creating an elevator speech using a “MadLib” for libraries.
- **Understanding the federal appropriations process, February 17:** PPA Assistant Director of Advocacy Communications Jil Staszewski held a training session on the federal appropriations process for the Policy Corps Group 3 participants. The workshop provided cohort members with

a detailed explanation of steps in the appropriation process, while noting the special circumstances in timing for 2021 with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were shown the importance of grassroots advocacy for ALA's annual #FundLibraries campaigns, and the significance of gathering as many signatures as possible for the 'Dear Appropriator' letters that are circulated in both the House and the Senate.

- **Writing and pitching an op-ed, March 4:** Shawnda Hines presented a workshop on the fundamentals of strategic op-ed writing and pitching to COLA members. The hourlong program provided authentic examples of effective op-eds and letters to the editor written by library advocates. Participants were given a format and several prompts for starting an op-ed on local funding for public, school, and academic libraries. PPA staff introduced ALA video and print resources on writing letters to the editor and [engaging traditional media](#) to draw attention to library issues.
- **Advocating through social media, March 22:** As part of the National Network advocacy program, PPA brought together advocates from Florida, Alabama, and New York to learn about the most effective ways to engage with members of Congress and other elected officials on social media. Leveraging PPA's extensive experience working with congressional offices on social media engagements, PPA Communications Associate Ian Ware presented "Manners with your Members: Social Media Tips for Engaging with elected officials." The workshop showed Network participants best practices for engaging with members of Congress, strategies for most effectively capturing elected officials' attention and tips on how to turn social media engagement into legislative victories. National Network participants will use these skills to continue their advocacy work in their communities, deepening the connections and relationships they have developed with legislators and legislative staff through the program.
- **Advocating in a digital world, March 23:** As part of REFORMA's two-part [Together from Home: Libraries Strong](#) event led by ALA Past president Loida Garcia-Febo, Shawnda Hines spoke to the international audience on advocacy in a digital era. Live-streamed on the REFORMA YouTube channel, the programs included speakers from Brazil, Hong Kong, Peru, Romania, and Singapore.

PPA reports to ALA Council on access to COVID-19 vaccines

During 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. Floor discussion clarified that the CDC prioritizes industries and not workers. Council members raised concern that the resolution might violate ALA's protocol for working on state and local issues.

After 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 a working group from the Committee on Legislation (Joe Thompson, Chair, and Lori Fisher), Chapter Relations Committee (Amy Lappin, Chair, and Brianna Hoffman) and the Committee on Library Advocacy (Justin de la Cruz, Chair and Cindy Bhatti) to gather information and provide a report to Council. The work group surveyed State Chapter leaders, conducted a scan of relevant state and local news, reviewed CDC immunization guidelines, interviewed librarians working in states that have played a role in advocating for priority phasing of library workers, and reviewed the [ALA Protocol for State and Local Issues](#).

The Vaccine Working Group members strongly support the importance of library workers being vaccinated. The working group believes that an ALA statement asking the CDC to include library workers

in vaccine phase 1b will have unintentional and potentially adverse consequences on state and local advocacy efforts in the future. It is the choice of the state chapter whether to invoke the existing federal phase 1c designation and/or pursue a change in state/local vaccination priorities given their specific knowledge about those vaccination plans, phases, and the local political climate.

It is clear from the chapter survey results that the desire and ability to prioritize library workers for the vaccine varies dramatically not just by state, but by locality within states. Given this advocacy environment, a local/state approach is best and fits within the protocol created by ALA leadership in 2008 to provide assistance only with the permission of and in coordination with the state chapter.

PPA ACTIVITY (January-March 2021)

Coalition and Office Letters:

- January 4: America's Libraries: Essential Partners in the Arts and Humanities
- January 6: Letter to the Education Review Team, Biden-Harris Transition Team
- January 8: Letter to the Biden-Harris Transition Agency Review Team for the FCC on E-rate Funding to Address the Connectivity Gap, E-rate Eligibility of Network Security, and Tribal Library E-rate Eligibility
- January 13: Signed onto coalition letter calling for State and Local Aid
- January 26: ALA endorses Dr. Miguel A. Cardona to be the next U.S. Secretary of Education in a letter to the Senate
- January 28: Letter urging the speedy nomination and confirmation of a fifth commissioner to the Federal Communications Commission
- February 12: Signed onto coalition letter, Coalition Supports State and Local Aid
- February 16: Signed onto Coalition Letter Requesting a Federal Moratorium on the use of Facial Recognition Technology (FRT)
- March 3: Signed onto Coalition Letter to the US Senate Regarding the Emergency Connectivity Fund and Addressing the Homework Gap
- March 8: Letter to Rep. Beatty in support of resolution supporting goals and ideals of National Deaf History Month
- March 10: Signed onto Letter to Secretary of the Dept. of Homeland Security Regarding Notice of Proposed Rulemaking 85 Fed. Reg. 74162, Collection of Biometric Data from Aliens Upon Entry to and Departure from the United States
- March 12: Coauthored Letter to President Biden in support of review of semiconductor supply chain and availability of education technology

Comments Filed:

- February 8, FCC: Comments Filed in the Matter of Modernizing the E-Rate Program for Schools and Libraries, Petition for Declaratory Relief and Petition for Rulemaking Allowing Additional Use of E-Rate Funds for K-12 Cybersecurity
- February 16, FCC: Comments filed Addressing the Homework Gap through the E-rate Program
- February 16, FCC: Reply Comments of ALA Before the FCC in the Matter of Emergency Broadband Benefit Program
- March 5, US Copyright Office: Comments filed by Library Copyright Alliance regarding Digital Copyright Act of 2021 draft
- March 10, US Copyright Office: Reply Comments of the Library Copyright Alliance to Oppositions to Proposed Class 5 Petition