

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, September 10, 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

FEDERAL FUNDING FOR LIBRARIES

PPA continues to monitor FY 2022 funding developments

PPA staff [mobilized library advocates](#) to contact their members of Congress to sign the fiscal year (FY) 2022 Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) *Dear Appropriator* letters in support of funding for school libraries and state library agencies' grants to public, academic, school and special libraries. The letters finished circulating in both the House and Senate in July. More than 100 Representatives signed each letter in the House (104 for LSTA and 110 for IAL), continuing five straight years of 100+ signatures. In the Senate, the letters gathered 48 signatures for LSTA and 34 for IAL.

On July 15, ALA [welcomed substantial increases](#) in federal funding for libraries approved by the House Appropriations Committee. The LSTA saw an increase of \$9 million, raising a total of \$206.5 million for the nation's primary source of federal funding for libraries. The increase for LSTA, if it holds in the final bill, would be the eighth consecutive increase for libraries. IAL, designed to support effective school library literacy initiatives, saw a \$3 million increase, for a total \$31 million for the Department of Education program.

Originally scheduled to be marked up by the Senate this summer, the Appropriations process is currently delayed as budget reconciliation negotiations have taken precedence in Congress. A continuing resolution is expected to be passed in September to keep the federal government operating through mid-December, allowing leadership to craft final spending bills into 2022.

PPA drives campaign for the Build America's Libraries Act

Public policy and advocacy efforts for the [Build America's Libraries Act](#) (H.R. 1581 / S. 127), which would provide a historic \$5 billion for library construction and renovation, have remained a top priority for PPA throughout the summer. The bill's bipartisan list of cosponsors has grown to 149 Representatives as of September 8, 2021, including a majority of House Democrats, and 30 Senators. The bill has been endorsed by over 30 national organizations, and on August 27, 2021, was [formally endorsed](#) by the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

On August 11, 2021, the U.S. Senate passed the budget resolution for FY 2022, which set in motion the process for Congress to develop a budget reconciliation package that will provide up to \$3.5 trillion in new federal spending. The resolution directs Congressional committees to submit legislation that allocates the funding by September 15, 2021. ALA engaged in targeted advocacy campaigns on both the grassstops and grassroots level, urging that the final package include funding for library renovation and construction, equivalent to the Build America's Libraries Act.

PPA staff held a press briefing on the bill in July, which included House bill lead sponsor Rep. Andy Levin (D-MI-09), ALA President Patty Wong and COL member and Cranston Public Library Director Ed Garcia. PPA staff also worked with advocates to place op-eds in local and national newspapers, and a targeted advertisement campaign in early September to further increase the bill's overall visibility.

PUBLIC POLICY

BROADBAND

PPA works to ensure libraries utilize Emergency Connectivity Fund program funding

PPA continued efforts on the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) program by encouraging libraries to apply for the funding and providing resources to help them do so successfully. The ECF will provide federal funding for public and tribal libraries and K12 schools to purchase connected devices and broadband internet connections for use off library and school grounds by library patrons, students and teachers and staff who otherwise lack internet access. The FCC opened a 45-day application window from June 29 through August 13, 2021. PPA staff developed a dedicated ECF resource [webpage](#), which includes a guide to complying with the Children's Internet Protection Act, and example circumstances to help libraries consider the variety of ways they could leverage the available funding to connect patrons who are otherwise unconnected at home.

In response to concerns raised by libraries about patron data collection and retention, PPA staff met with FCC staff to seek clarifications and modifications of these requirements. PPA submitted several letters outlining the issue of concern and possible solutions.

In July, PPA staff, along with the E-rate Task Force, held an informational webinar for state E-rate coordinators and [an Instagram live event](#) with the Harris County Public Library (TX), the Columbus Metropolitan Public Library (OH), and the Arkansas River Valley Regional Library System to share strategies regarding the ECF program. The FCC announced a second application window that will open on September 28, 2021, as they received over \$5 billion in demand for funding throughout the first application window. PPA staff will continue outreach to encourage libraries to apply in this second window. Since the first application window closed, PPA staff have been working with the FCC and state E-rate coordinators to determine both the total number of libraries that applied and for how much funding.

PPA supports increased broadband access through legislation

Throughout the summer, PPA staff [worked](#) to ensure libraries would be eligible for funding in any broadband provisions negotiated as either part of the bi-partisan [Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act](#) (IIJA) or the budget reconciliation bill. Working with grassroots advocates, PPA staff contacted targeted members of Congress to include the Digital Equity Act, originally introduced by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and endorsed by ALA. PPA also [urged](#) Congress to include libraries and other anchor institutions in the broadband deployment provisions of the IIJA. PPA continues to work with education groups to seek additional funding for the ECF program, and [supported](#) the SUCCESS Act, [introduced](#) by Senators Ed Markey (D-MA) and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Congresswoman Grace Meng (D-NY-6).

EBOOKS

ALA supports chapter advocacy on digital books

Advocacy on digital books (eBooks and digital audio books) continues to be active in light of the Maryland legislation (HB518 / SB432) becoming law, along with the passage of legislation in New York state (S2890B / A5837B). In July, the Maryland Library Association (MLA) issued a [statement](#) on the meaning of "reasonable access," which included a [quote from ALA President](#) Patty Wong. PPA continues

to provide legal, policy, and media advice and assistance to MLA and the New York Library Association on this issue, as well as other ALA chapters. In July, Senior Director of Public Policy and Government Relations Alan Inouye spoke in the final episode of the weekly [MLA Conversations Series](#), “Episode 54 on eBooks and Public Policy.”

ALA responds to Copyright Office analysis of state eBook legislation

The U.S. Copyright Office [released a letter](#) to respond to the query from Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC) about possible federal preemption of state eBook law and legislation. ALA has held Hill meetings regarding the Tillis request, and issued a [statement](#) in response to the U.S. Copyright Office letter. ALA firmly believes that the Maryland law and pending legislation in several states are not in conflict with the Copyright Act or the U.S. Constitution.

ADVOCACY OUTREACH

ALA publishes resource on how to conduct a library tour with elected officials

In July, PPA staff published an updated tool, “[How to Conduct an In-Person Library Tour](#),” for library advocates to meet with their elected officials during the monthlong congressional recess in month of August. [The resource](#) walks advocates through the best practices and steps for requesting and scheduling a library tour, things to consider when developing the content and points of interest, and how to publicize the tour to relevant audiences on social media.

ALA partners with Communities for Immunity to boost vaccine confidence

ALA partnered with [Communities for Immunity](#), a collaboration among libraries and museums to boost COVID-19 information and vaccine confidence in communities across the nation. The [partnership](#) provides a unique opportunity for libraries, museums, science centers and other cultural institutions to apply for dedicated funding to develop evidence-driven materials, resources, programs, and approaches specifically designed to help engage diverse audiences in vaccine confidence. PPA has encouraged libraries to review the partnership’s website, eligibility requirements and apply for funding. The first application window was open from August 5 through September 2, 2021, and the next application window will open from October 4-29, 2021. Awardees will be announced starting in December 2021.

ALA’s Libraries Build Business expands online community, launches peer coaching program

The Libraries Build Business (LBB) cohort continues implementation of their small business and entrepreneur development programs. While most programs are being offered virtually or with other modifications due to COVID-19, library small business programs have been able to offer some in-person business services and access to library spaces.

Beyond the day-to-day project implementation, the project team and the LBB cohort are working on big-picture goals of scaling the community and developing promising practices and resources to share with the field. The LBB cohort continues bi-weekly peer learning meetings. Cohort members and ALA project staff rotate facilitation and leadership of the meetings. Guest speakers include equity, diversity, and inclusion consultant, LaKesha Kimbrough, who led the cohort in a workshop on Healing Centered Engagement.

LBB continues to expand the online community to new members interested in small business and entrepreneurship programs. Cohort members, along with the ALA project team co-manage the Slack

discussion board, invite new members, post resources, and facilitate discussions. The Community has grown to over 60 libraries since the beginning of 2021.

In July, [Libraries Build Business identified six peer coaches to offer free mentorship and coaching](#) to those interested in starting or growing a small business or entrepreneur program. Selected coaches receive additional grant funding, professional development, and to be named an ALA Fellow. The project staff is consulting with Development Without Limits to provide coaching, leadership, and facilitation training and support to the coaches. Coaches have begun their professional development and have started working with mentees. This opportunity will be available through March 2022, pending coach availability. Coaches will also offer workshops for the entire community this fall that will be available to anyone interested.

Measurement and evaluation efforts continue to be led by ALA's partners at Cicero Group. The data collection tools, including surveys and focus group protocols, were updated to reflect the feedback from the library cohort. The data collection instruments, Theory of Change, and Evaluation Framework will be made available with the project resources at the end of the project period. In addition, the project team will partner with Project Outcome at PLA to offer some of the LBB evaluation materials through the Project Outcome platform.

The LBB project team has also started an exciting partnership with ALA Editions to produce a book, tentatively entitled *30 Library Programs to Build Business*. This book will share promising small business development programs in libraries for other libraries to adopt, as well as insights from the LBB project. The book is scheduled for completion in December 2021. The book will feature profiles from the Libraries Build Business cohort libraries, as well as other libraries with innovative and successful business and entrepreneur programs. Libraries were chosen through an application process and will be featured in the book.

Libraries Build Business offered two on-demand sessions at ALA Annual Virtual Conference in June: *Libraries Build Business and Economic Resilience*, and *Pandemic Pivot: Innovative Small Business Development Programs*. Each on-demand session featured a panel of speakers from the cohort. Additionally, Libraries Build Business hosted a virtual networking mixer for anyone interested in connecting with the community. Cohort members shared strategies, resources, and stories from their programs with peers, answered questions, and invited those interested to join the Slack discussion board.

Libraries Build Business engaged in a variety of outreach and promotion events, including monthly Instagram Live events with LBB cohort members, [Richland Library \(July\) and Independence Public Library \(August\)](#). Cohort members also participated in the June PLA webinar [Building Business Know-How through Data Literacy](#).

PPA staff participates in Committee for Education Funding Advocacy Day

In July, PPA's Kevin Maher, Deputy Director of Government Relations, and Jil Staszewski, Assistant Director of Advocacy Communications participated in the Committee for Education Funding's (CEF) virtual hill day. Along with other members of the committee, PPA staff met with the offices of several congressional leaders in support of increases in federal education funding.

ALA continues engagement with National Network

The National Network continues its monthly Key Contact calls, led by PPA's Kathi Kromer and Jil

Staszewski, along with David Lusk, founder of Key Advocacy. PPA staff provides the Key Contacts with updates on any relevant legislative activities and facilitates an advocacy action for members to complete. Throughout the summer, Key Contacts were asked to post on social media and contact their members of Congress in support of the Build America's Libraries Act and including funding for libraries in the budget reconciliation bill.

ALA deepens collaboration on civic engagement

In early August, ALA [announced](#) that it is once again a premier partner of National Voter Registration Day, an annual event that takes place in late September. Outreach efforts feature [partner libraries](#) that can speak to the benefits of participation.

ALA supports 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 as well as national campaigns. Late spring saw the passage of eBooks legislation in [Maryland](#), with a similar bill passing both chambers in [New York](#). A third bill in [Rhode Island](#) did not move out of committee. (See EBOOKS section above.) Late spring and summer saw a high number of special sessions across states, primarily to allocate federal relief funds.

Of continued concern is restrictions to teaching and learning (under the banner of critical race theory bans) enacted via legislation in at least eight states and proposed in dozens of others, with additional restrictive actions by state and local boards of education and, in a few cases, by state attorneys general. The state legislative summit, co-hosted by PPA and the Office for Intellectual Freedom, will take place on Saturday, October 16, and will address those restrictive actions and other adverse legislation.

PPA assists with advocacy at the local level

PPA has provided consultation and support to library workers and advocates in Tennessee, Illinois, Michigan, Alaska, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, and Alabama.

COLA offers webinars on library advocacy

Current and former COLA members recorded, "A National Priority: LIS Faculty and Students and Library Advocates," for the Association for Library and Information Science Education, to be paired with a live discussion at their September conference. COLA's [Ecosystem Subcommittee](#) offered a webinar for library instructors in early September.

PPA STAFF SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS:

- As a part of ALA's Annual Virtual Conference in June, Dr. Alan Inouye participated as a speaker for both the [RUSA President's Program](#), *Accessibility for All: Perspectives on Accessibility*, and [How Libraries Facilitate Book Discovery and Cross-media Engagement: News from Immersive Media & Books 2020](#).
- In mid-June, Megan Cusick conducted Advocacy Academy for the leadership of the Library and Information Association of Jamaica.
- In July, Megan Cusick met with member leaders of the Arkansas Library Association to explore opportunities for a newly launched member community of interest.

- In July, Shawnda Hines presented ALA's legislative agenda alongside other library advocacy groups for the National Archives and Records Administration.
- Megan Cusick presented "*National Issues, Local Impact*" at the National Conference of African American Librarians.
- In collaboration with the Office for Intellectual Freedom, Megan Cusick presented [*Advocating in Advance: Keeping Ahead of Legislation and Local Initiatives*](#) at the United for Libraries conference in August.
- In August, Shawnda Hines presented on a Public Affairs Council webinar [*Coordinating Government Relations and Communications*](#).

PPA COALITION LETTERS AND FILINGS

- [June 23 letter](#) to the Copyright Office regarding the DVD Preservation ex parte summary
- [June 24 letter](#) Software Preservation Network letter to US Trade Representative Katherine Tai supporting LDC's request for transition period
- June 28 [coalition letter](#) to Congressional leadership supporting federal broadband infrastructure
- [August 5 coalition letter](#) to Senate in Support of Funding for Anchor Institutions in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
- [August 5 letter](#) to Senate Leadership regarding Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act