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# ALA Office for Library Advocacy

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## Shaping your Message: Information for Legislative Advocates

Library advocates must be able to articulate issues in a way that transcends partisan politics, acknowledges economic realities, and positions libraries as part of the solution to larger problems.

Both old friends in Congress and new members must be helped to understand the role of libraries and librarians in the Electronic Age.

### They must also understand:

- The importance of federal and state leadership in library funding.
- The significance of libraries when dealing with intellectual property, confidentiality, freedom of information and other policy issues.
- The relative modest investment of tax dollars that result in huge benefits.

### Key points:

- Libraries are central to a literate society.
- Libraries help prepare Americans of all ages to compete in a global economy.
- Libraries are "wired." They make information technology available to all.
- Public libraries are community assets. They are resource centers for education, employment and recreation.
- Libraries are part of the American dream. They are a place for education and self-help.
- Libraries bring opportunity to all—including poor, minority, immigrant and rural populations.
- School libraries play a crucial role in preparing youth to be literate, productive citizens.
- Academic libraries are critical to advancing knowledge.

## Who Can be Most Effective?

Selecting the best person to deliver your message can make the difference as to whether you are successful. Smart legislative advocates know which legislators are most influential on any given issue. They also know the names of those who are in a position to influence the legislator. The most important person to any elected official is a **voting constituent**.

Other important people are:

- Campaign donors
- Local civic and business leaders
- Editors of local media who shape editorial opinions and news coverage
- Potential candidates who may oppose lawmakers in future elections
- Individuals who have had a positive impact on his or her life