

**Outside Witness Testimony of  
Gavin Baker, Deputy Director, Public Policy and Government Relations  
American Library Association**

**Before the Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch**

**On Fiscal Year 2021 Funding for the  
Library of Congress and Government Publishing Office**

**May 1, 2020**

Chair Hyde-Smith, Ranking Member Murphy, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the American Library Association, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony regarding Legislative Branch Appropriations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. We respectfully request the Committee's support for the Library of Congress and the Government Publishing Office, which provide valuable services to libraries and the public nationwide.

**Library of Congress**

The Library of Congress is the largest library in the world, a shining example of our nation's commitment to preserving and advancing American culture. The Library serves not only Congress, but also libraries across the country and the American public. The Library celebrated its 220<sup>th</sup> birthday this year, and it continues to modernize its services and facilities to meet current and future needs.

The Library's Visitor Experience Initiative will highlight its unique collections and inspire millions of visitors to learn, create, and innovate. Despite temporary closures as a public health precaution in response to COVID-19, upon reopening the Library will resume its position as a leading attraction in the nation's capital, having welcomed nearly 2 million onsite visitors in FY 2019. The planned multi-year investments of the Visitor Experience Initiative will strengthen the Library's leadership as a global symbol of America's cultural heritage.

In addition, the Library's services support education and research far beyond the walls of its buildings through activities such as the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled and the Veterans History Project.

The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled serves readers who cannot see print or handle print materials. This national program provides access to books and reading materials through a network of regional libraries, such as the Mississippi Library Commission's Talking Book Services and the Connecticut State Library's Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. The network serves readers across America, circulating more than 21 million books and magazines in FY 2019.

FY 2021: Library of Congress and Government Publishing Office  
American Library Association outside witness testimony

The Veterans History Project collects, preserves, and makes accessible the personal stories of American veterans. The nation's largest oral history project, the Veterans History Project added more than 3,000 new collections in FY 2019.

Additionally, the Library is making continued progress to collaboratively modernize operations of the U.S. Copyright Office. By digitizing historical copyright records, the Copyright Office is making it easier for users to identify the rightsholder or status of registered works. The Copyright Office is also reengineering its daily processes to be more efficient and effective.

### **Government Publishing Office**

The Government Publishing Office provides essential information to America's businesses, legal system, and researchers. The Office serves users across the country through the Federal Depository Library Program, its online repository of government information, and its other public information programs.

The Federal Depository Library Program helps Americans access federal laws, regulations, and publications in communities across the nation. More than 1,100 libraries participate in the program, including the University of Mississippi's J.D. Williams Library and Connecticut's Bridgeport Public Library. Bipartisan modernization legislation introduced in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress would further strengthen the program, if enacted; we hope that the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress will reintroduce and pass it.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the Office annually adds thousands of new government publications to its free online repository, govinfo.gov, and catalogs thousands of publications every year to assist researchers in locating them. To preserve these important documents of our republic, the Office manages a cooperative preservation program with libraries across the country.

### **Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee regarding Fiscal Year 2021 funding for the Library of Congress and the Government Publishing Office. We ask for the Subcommittee's support in meeting the requests for these important national programs that serve Congress, libraries, and the American public.

The American Library Association ("ALA") is the foremost national organization providing resources to inspire library and information professionals to transform their communities through essential programs and services. For more than 140 years, the ALA has been the trusted voice for academic, public, school, government and special libraries, advocating for the profession and the library's role in enhancing learning and ensuring access to information for all.

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<sup>1</sup> FDLP Modernization Act of 2018, H.R. 5305, 115<sup>th</sup> Cong. (2018).