

**Report to Council
2024 LibLearnX
Ed Garcia, Chair - ALA Committee on Legislation (COL)**

COL Committee Members:

Ed Garcia (Chair), Kate Alderete, Tania Bardyn, Deborah Doyle, Shauntee Burns-Simpson, Lori Fisher, Dr. Ursula Gorham, Susan Hempstead, Kathy Lester, Dr. Maria McCauley, James G. Neal, Sherry Virginia Neal, Kent Oliver, Jana Stevenson, Joseph Thompson, Lisa L. Wells, Sara Dallas (Executive Board Liaison)

COL Charge

The ALA Council Committee on Legislation (COL) is charged with the responsibility for the association's legislative agenda. Specifically, to:

- Identify, for the Public Policy & Advocacy Office, the association's strategic priorities.
- Recommend, annually, based on consultation with the Public Policy & Advocacy Office, a legislative and public policy agenda.
- Review and advise on any policy statements and/or resolutions that have an impact on federal legislation, policy, or regulations.
- Provide a forum within ALA to share information and legislative analysis of current and impending federal laws and regulations to keep ALA units apprised of current issues affecting libraries.
- Be available to consult, collaborate and offer assistance to state and local library entities when federal legislation has implications at the state and local level.

COL Legislative Agenda

At the Fall COL retreat in November and December 2023, COL discussed and approved the Federal Legislative and Public Policy Agenda for 2024 (attached to this report). The agenda is focused on four key areas: Funding; Digital Inclusion and Skills; Copyright, Licensing and Competition; and Government Information and Services.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Government Information Subcommittee/GODORT liaison

The Committee voted to sunset the Government Information Subcommittee due to lack of activity over the past few years. An unofficial liaison has been created between the Government Documents Round Table (GODORT) and COL, to keep the committee apprised any government information issues. Lisa Pritchard has been appointed to the liaison role through 2025.

MLSA taskforce

This past August an 11-member taskforce was created with members appoint by the COL Chair with a charge: to advise the Committee on Legislation (COL) and the Public Policy and Advocacy Office (PPA) on key issues in the upcoming reauthorization of the Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA), to invite input from stakeholders, and to report recommendations to COL and PPA by Annual Conference 2024. MLSA will be due for reauthorization in early 2025. Former COL Chair Joseph Thompson was appointed Chair of the Taskforce. The taskforce roster has representation from COL, COSLA, types of libraries, different geographic areas and political districts. The taskforce has met twice this past fall. An initial meeting was held with staff from Senator Jack Reed's office, as he will likely be the lead sponsor on the reauthorization. COL Chair Ed Garcia attended the annual meeting of the Chief Office of State Library Agencies (COSLA) in Newport, RI on 11/1 to hold a feedback session for initial feedback from COSLA members.

COL Fall Retreat

This year the COL Retreat was held virtually over two days, 11/15 and 12/15. ALA President Emily Drabinski provided comments at the Retreat. The committee worked with PPA staff to develop and approve the Federal Legislative and Public Policy Agenda for 2024. There were also issue briefings and policy discussions with Penn Hill Group, PPA Staff and the ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom.

Fall Executive Board meetings

COL Chair Ed Garcia and Interim PPA Associate Executive Director Alan Inouye report to the Executive Board on October 15 about COL and PPA activities.

AASL Crystal Apple Award

At their biennial national conference, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) recognized Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) and Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) with the Crystal Apple Award for their introduction of the Right to Read Act and ongoing support of school librarians. The award is given at the discretion of the AASL President to an individual or group that has had a significant impact on school libraries and students. AASL Immediate Past President and COL committee member Kathy Lester journeyed to Rhode Island to present the award to Senator Reed at the Cranston Public Library on October 30th alongside COL Chair and Cranston Public Library Director Ed Garcia. They were joined at the awards presentation by representatives of the Rhode Island Library Association, School Librarians of Rhode Island and Cranston Mayor Kenneth Hopkins. The award will be presented to Rep. Grijalva at a future date.

Council Actions

At the 2023 Annual Conference, ALA Council passed the “[Resolution Condemning Discrimination Against Library Workers and Supporting the LGBTQIA+ Community.](#)” This resolution created a taskforce with representation from COL. COL member Kate Alderete was appointed to the taskforce and is serving as chair.

Liaisons

The following COL members were appointed by the COL Chair as liaisons:

COL Liaison to the Sustainability Committee – Susan Hempstead (2023-2024)

COL Liaison to the IFC Privacy Subcommittee – Dr. Ursula Gorham (2023-2025)

ALA Liaison to the CoSa-NAGARA-RAAC-SAA Joint Working Group – Joseph Thompson (2023-2024)

FEDERAL LEGISLATION AND POLICY UPDATES

FUNDING AND SUPPORT

Libraries included in WIOA draft bill

In December, House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC) and Ranking Member Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D-VA) introduced [H.R. 6655, A Stronger Workforce for America Act](#). The bipartisan bill makes critical improvements to the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) that will expand the skills development provided under the law and strengthen the relationship between employers and the workforce system. The proposed legislation would add public libraries as eligible one stop operators.

ALA Invited to participate in Congressional Funding Showcase

ALA was invited to participate in a December [Congressional showcase](#) highlighting the positive impacts of federal funding on education and libraries. ALA staff met with a number of Congressional offices to expand on how this funding has allowed school, public and academic libraries to expand the range of services and resources to patrons. The event was held in the Capitol Visitors Center and hosted by the Committee for Education Funding.

ALA Endorses Introduction of Adult Education Works Act

Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) reintroduced the bi-partisan Adult Education WORKS Act to strengthen and expand programs for adult learners. This important legislation would expand access and services for adult learners, improving career pathways. The bill would increase funding for adult education in public libraries and community-based organizations. ALA endorsed the bill and [Senator Reed included a quote](#) from ALA President Emily Drabinski in his press release. Senator Todd Young (R-IN) was an original cosponsor in the Senate and Reps. Lucy McBath (D-GA), Frank Mrvan (D-IN), and Kathy Manning (D-NC) led the House introduction.

FEDERAL INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM ISSUES

ALA Endorses Fight Book Bans Act

In December, Rep. Maxwell Frost (D-FL) introduced the ALA-endorsed Fight Book Bans Act aimed at combating the surge of book banning in schools. The legislation, cosponsored by Reps. Jamie Raskin (D-MD) and Frederica Wilson (D-FL), would offer school districts funding to defend against the ongoing surge in challenges to books and educational materials. [ALA joined](#) with more than a dozen national organizations in supporting this legislation.

ALA Works to Oppose Amendments to National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)

In December, Congress approved the annual NDAA legislation authorizing defense policy and sets parameters for how federal money will be spent. ALA successfully worked to eliminate several anti-library amendments. Several amendments rejected by the [Conference Committee](#) would have limited free speech and access to information for library patrons.

Senate and House hold hearings on Book Bans

Two committees held hearings on book bans. The Senate Judiciary Committee invited ALA to testify at its [September 12 hearing](#): Book Bans: Examining How Censorship Limits Liberty and Literature. ALA witness Carmeron Samuels informed the committee that “Libraries are centers for voluntary inquiry. Censorship, however, places a limit on students’ liberty to learn.” In October, the [House Education and Workforce Committee](#) held a hearing on book bans where Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) noted that censorship laws are “being enacted by extreme MAGA politicians under the pretext of parental rights.”

DIGITAL INCLUSION & SKILLS

ALA Endorses Tribal Connect Act

Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM) introduced the Tribal Connect Act which would improve broadband connectivity in tribal communities. The ALA-endorsed bill would establish a Tribal Essential Community-Serving Institution Pilot Program, provide technical assistance to Tribal governments, and require the FCC to develop performance goals and measures. The bi-partisan [legislation was introduced](#) in September.

ALA welcomes FCC programs to support broadband access in libraries

- FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel [announced the Learn Without Limits initiative](#) at ALA’s 2023 Annual Conference. These proposed changes to the E-rate program would support Wi-Fi on School Buses and hotspot lending at schools and libraries. Separate from E-rate, but within USF, the [Chairwoman also announced a cybersecurity pilot](#) to address network security issues that schools and libraries face. ALA has been involved in meetings with Commissioners’ offices to express support for Learn Without Limits and provide examples from the field that will inform the development of the program.

- In July, the [FCC adopted the “Improving the E-rate Rules and Processes for Tribal Applicants” Order](#). The effort will make it easier for Tribal libraries, as well as other small and rural libraries, to participate in the E-rate program. ALA and the FCC co-hosted a [webinar](#) to discuss the changes for tribal libraries. The FCC also issued a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM) asking for further questions focused on streamlining and simplifying the program. American Library Association [submitted reply comments](#) to the FCC Regarding Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Mechanism, Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, and Changes to the Board of Directors of the National Exchange Carrier Association, Inc.

ALA supports new FCC leadership confirmations

In September, [the Senate confirmed the fifth FCC commissioner, Anna Gomez](#), restoring the Commission to a full complement of Commissioners for the first time in 2+ years. The Senate also reconfirmed Commissioners Starks and Carr. ALA [welcomed the confirmation](#) of Commissioner Gomez. In October, ALA also joined a [coalition letter](#) nominating Carla Wade to serve on the Universal Service Administrative Company Board of Directors.

ALA to Launch New Digital Inclusion Working Group for Library Workers

The American Library Association (ALA) Public Policy and Advocacy Office and the [National Digital Inclusion Alliance \(NDIA\)](#) [announced a new Digital Inclusion Working Group](#) for library workers to exchange knowledge around digital equity work taking place in all library contexts. The working group will meet monthly, facilitated by PPA staff members Megan Janicki and Emily Durkin. Meeting topics will be driven by the digital inclusion discussion generated in the group and will include regular digital equity and inclusion policy updates. The first meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 30, at 4 p.m. EST.

ALA Files Comments in Support of Net Neutrality

The Federal Communications Commission launched a [request for public comment](#) on net neutrality proposed rules, its first steps towards reaffirming a free, open and fair internet. ALA, a [strong supporter](#) of the principles of net neutrality, filed comments urging the Commission to implement rules which had been repealed during the Trump administration. The American Library Association [submitted comments](#) to the Federal Communications Commission's Notice for Proposed Rulemaking for Safeguarding and Securing the Open Internet and [previously filed comments](#) in opposition to Motion for Extension of Time Regarding Reinstating Open Internet Rules.

COPYRIGHT, LICENSING & COMPETITION

ALA Joins Supreme Court Copyright Filing

ALA joined on a Brief of [Amici Curiae](#) with Electronic Frontier Foundation, Authors Alliance, and Association Of Research Libraries In Support Of Petitioners.

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION & SERVICES

ALA Works for Improved Education Statistics

The U.S. Senate approved [S. 3392](#), the Advancing Research in Education Act (AREA), which would reauthorize and improve the Education Department's statistical and research activities, including its data collection about school and academic libraries. ALA successfully urged Senate staff to include helpful language for school and academic libraries. The research is not empty bureaucracy: by strengthening data collection about school and academic libraries, we can better understand how those libraries support students and faculty, as well as identify challenges that libraries may be facing – and improve data collection from HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions. ALA launched an action alert to thank Senators for passing this legislation.

COL SUBCOMMITTEES

Copyright, Legislation, Education and Advocacy Network (CLEAN)

CLEAN members are scheduled to give policy briefings to the full Committee on Legislation at monthly meetings this committee year. CLEAN Chair Tomas Lipinski gave a presentation on contractual override at the October COL meeting. Heather Briston will be presenting on digital for sale rights in January, Kyle Courtney will present on ebook legislation in February and Kathleen de Laurenti will present on AI and copyright in April.

OTHER PPA ACTIVITIES

PPA welcomes member leaders to Washington

PPA hosted member leaders in Washington, D.C., office this quarter. In October, PPA facilitated President Drabinski's [panel appearance with MSNBC's Ali Velshi](#) at PFLAG's national conference, where she received a standing ovation. In November, PPA provided a two-day briefing on ALA policy and advocacy priorities for ALA President-Elect **Cindy Hohl**. In December, PPA staff hosted members of the ALA Policy Corps cadre dedicated to advancing the Unite Against Book Bans campaign. The cadre strategized and created an action plan for engaging diverse campaign partners and proactively reaching out to media.

ALA Receives an Award

ALA received an award on October 11th at the [National Celebration of Reading](#) at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts sponsored by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy with welcoming remarks by First Lady Jill Biden.

TAKE ACTION

Please sign up for the Unite Against Book Bans campaign if you or your organization has not yet done so. Many have joined but many have not. <https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/>

You can subscribe to [ALA's advocacy alerts](#) to take targeted actions at key moments on federal policy. We only ask you to act when your advocacy is needed most. <http://ala.org/takeaction>

Also, if you want the latest library policy news and updates, please follow us on Twitter at [@LibraryPolicy](#).

American Library Association (ALA)

Committee on Legislation

Federal Legislative and Public Policy Agenda for 2024

Policymakers must ensure libraries are equipped to safely meet their communities' needs for technology access, education and learning, economic recovery and development, research, health and well-being, and civic engagement. Policies should support the contributions of libraries of all types, with emphasis on meeting the needs of underserved groups. Advancing access to information, sustainability, diversity, equity, and inclusion underpin and permeate our legislative advocacy. We will remain steadfast in our defense of intellectual freedom and library users' freedom to read.

ALA's Committee on Legislation encourages ALA members and library supporters to advocate on the following library priorities in 2024. ALA will monitor and engage on these and other [federal issues](#) that affect libraries and will join with partners and coalitions to promote strong and equitable libraries. We urge ALA members and library supporters to [sign up as advocates](#) and use [ALA's advocacy resources](#) to build effective relationships with decisionmakers. We will work to advance these agenda items before Congress and the Administration.

Funding and Support

[Equitable federal funding](#) for library services is essential to ensuring that every community in America has strong libraries. Key issues for 2024:

Dedicated library programs: Increase and maintain funding for the:

- Institute of Museum and Library Services, including the Library Services and Technology Act, and in the upcoming reauthorization of the Museum and Library Services Act;
- Innovative Approaches to Literacy program and support for [school libraries](#) through the Department of Education;
- Library facilities, sustainability, and resilience; and
- National library programs, including the Library of Congress, National Library of Medicine, National Agricultural Library, and the Federal Depository Library Program.

Library-eligible programs: Continue and enhance federal programs for which libraries are eligible recipients or partners. Recognize and support libraries' important roles in:

- K-12 and early education, including in reauthorizing the Every Student Succeeds Act;
- Higher education, including in reauthorizing the Higher Education Act;

- Economic and workforce development, including in reauthorizing the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#); and
- Other crucial community services, including through the National Endowment for the Humanities, Community Development Block Grants, and other applicable programs.

Library workers: Preserve library workers' eligibility for Public Service Loan Forgiveness. Promote safe work environments for library workers.

IMLS Director: Timely nomination and confirmation of a qualified candidate to serve as the next Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Digital Inclusion and Skills

To promote digital equity, access to technology, and enable modern library services, libraries in all parts of the country must be able to serve their users with fast and affordable [broadband](#), technology access, and digital skills training. Key issues for 2024:

E-rate: Preserve funding for E-rate, improve libraries' access to the program, and expand eligible uses.

Internet access and digital equity: Preserve and expand resources for libraries to support Internet access and digital equity, such as activities under the Affordable Connectivity Program, Digital Equity Act, and Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program.

Content access and liability: Restore [net neutrality](#) protections. Preserve Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act liability protections for libraries.

Copyright, Licensing, and Competition

Libraries rely on balanced and flexible [copyright policy](#) to enable vital library services. ALA supports a modern copyright system with effective user rights and limitations and exceptions to copyright. Additionally, libraries rely on fair licenses and market practices in order to provide access to digital content such as [e-books](#). Key issues for 2024:

E-books and digital content: Prevent unfair and anti-competitive practices that limit libraries' ability to meet their users' reading and information needs, including by license terms that purport to restrict copyright exceptions.

Copyright Office: Maintain the Librarian of Congress' authority to manage and oversee the Copyright Office.

Government Information and Services

Libraries provide access to [government information](#) and services in communities across the country. ALA supports policies that assist libraries in providing no-fee permanent public access to government information and equitable access to government services, which includes voting. Key issues for 2024:

Federal Depository Library Program: Modernize the [Federal Depository Library Program](#).

Public access to research: Ensure public access to publicly funded research and data.