

American Library Association
March Virtual Council Meeting
March 10, 2022: 3:00 pm CT

ALA President Wong called the meeting to order.

Parliamentarian Eli Mina reviewed the meeting rules and outlined the process for debate and voting.

APPROVED by Consent:

- Meeting Rules, CD #5.1
- Agenda, CD #8.4

Resolution to Support School and Youth Services Librarians Facing Increased Intellectual Freedom Challenges, CD #51

Councilor Joyce K. Valenza read the following resolved clause:

Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA) on behalf of its members:

1. commits to ongoing support of all children's right to read, their equitable access to diverse books and informational resources, and their right to library services by:
 - a. Reaffirming that the freedom to read supports active citizens of the future and speaks against censorship of youth library books and resources.
 - b. Upholding a parent's right to decide what their own children can read, but not what other children can read as stated in the Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights and the Access to Resources and Services in the School Library;
2. reaffirms their support of school librarians who face challenges and threats of prosecution or job loss by:
 - a. Condemning the intimidation of librarians and library workers in or beyond their place of work
 - b. Advocating for strict adherence to library collection and reconsideration policies
 - c. Defending librarians' professional responsibility to ensure their print and digital collections represent a variety of viewpoints that support the diversity of their communities and offer the breadth of history;
3. solicits anti-censorship position statements, endorsements, and partnerships at various ALA levels with stakeholders including educational organizations that support students' right to read, education unions and school administration groups, parent and student groups, ALA state chapters and organizations which include authors, vendors, publishers, and professional publications to support students' right to read;
4. commits to widely disseminating talking points for librarians, library workers, administrators, and their supporters in school and public libraries to speak to citizens and community stakeholders emphasizing the importance of following established policies and of inclusive library collections;
5. encourages ALA members to become more involved with intellectual freedom efforts in ALA, to act as liaison between other ALA groups and IFRT and IFC, to always report challenges to the

Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) in support of accurate statistics, to donate to the LeRoy C. Merritt Humanitarian Fund supporting library workers who are facing financial difficulties for their support of intellectual freedom, and to join the Freedom to Read Foundation; and
6. commits to speaking with one voice across the Association against threats to students' right to read and threats to their First Amendment rights.

Councilor Valenza noted the resolution is in response to concerted efforts from well-funded groups to limit intellectual freedom. Colleagues are being threatened with loss of their jobs, criminal charges, and being publicly labeled as pornographers. Their collections are being scrutinized and compromised by administrators who may not understand the process of a citizen complaint or the historical dangers of limiting access to materials. The resolution supports the efforts of librarians in ensuring that all people have access to rich and inclusive collections.

Multiple councilors expressed support for the resolution, including on behalf of the Intellectual Freedom Round Table and Social Responsibilities Round Table.

Councilor Mario Gonzalez asked where the Florida Library Association stands on the resolution. It was noted that the resolution is endorsed by the Florida Library Association.

Question: How can this resolution prevent the harassment, discipline, and termination of library workers? Answer: This is addressed in the resolved clause.

Councilor Gina Kromhout emphasized the importance of taking direct action to assist librarians in addition to the resolution, including wider and systemized responses from ALA members.

President Wong called for a vote for Resolution to Support School and Youth Services Librarians Facing Increased Intellectual Freedom Challenges, CD #51

Results:

- 143 yes
- 0 no
- 0 abstain

APPROVED Resolution to Support School and Youth Services Librarians Facing Increased Intellectual Freedom Challenges, CD #51

Resolution to Promote Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Efforts in AASL While Addressing Historical Effects of Racism, CD #52

Councilor Diane Chen read the following resolved clause:

Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members

1. Acknowledges the American Association of School Librarians' past actions and inactions that have harmed members of the profession;
2. Apologizes to Black school librarians for wrongs committed against them and for AASL's inactions on behalf of

segregated school libraries and school library state associations;

3. Apologizes to all Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) school librarians for AASL's part in historical racism and segregation in the school librarian profession;
4. Commits to promoting diversity in school librarianship in undergraduate and graduate programs and at school recruitment fairs;
5. Commits to ensuring a diverse and inclusive membership by recruiting, welcoming and encouraging BIPOC school librarians to consider leadership opportunities within ALA and AASL;
6. Commits to applying and prioritizing an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) lens in all aspects of the greater work of AASL and ALA;
7. Commits to sustaining a more diverse and inclusive leadership within ALA and AASL in terms of ethnicity, gender, and ability representation;
8. Communicates all EDI initiatives throughout AASL, ALA and the profession;
9. Creates opportunities and resources for collaboration with ALA divisions, ALA chapters, AASL chapters, ALA Roundtables and Ethnic Caucuses to create a stronger voice for our profession.

Councilor Chen noted this resolution is not solely an apology for inaction and harm to others regarding past actions. While looking at actions of the past, AASL looked at ALA and AASL today and web pages to see how well we are working together on current EDI initiatives. AASL has taken some beginning steps and initiatives to support equity, diversity and inclusion as listed in the resolution. EDI is at the forefront of AASL policies, its strategic and operational plans, and within every area of school librarian practice. AASL acknowledges and apologizes for past actions and inactions that have harmed members of the profession, and the part AASL and ALA have played in historical racism and segregation. AASL commits to promoting diversity at the beginning of their careers in leadership opportunities and in the greater work of AASL through an EDI lens in a substantial manner. There are also opportunities for better communication of efforts that are underway.

Point of Inquiry: The resolved clause number 3 says "black and indigenous people of color." They believe it would be more appropriate to say "black, indigenous and people of color." Councilor Chen noted that change will be reflected in final resolution draft.

Multiple councilors expressed support of the resolution, particularly its specific commitment to future actions.

Councilor Tina Thomas asked, for clauses 6 & 7, which refer to an "EDI lens," is there an EDI lens in place? Additionally, could we address that ethnicity, gender and ability (as referenced in the resolution) are a piece of diversity but not the whole picture? ALA has an existing list that could act as guidance. Councilor Chen noted that the movers welcome the expansion of what diversity includes, as well as updates and revision to language. President Wong asked that the resolution be referred to Executive Director Hall for housekeeping updates to the language referencing diversity and NALCOs.

President Wong called for a vote on the Resolution to Promote Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) efforts in AASL while Addressing Historical Effects of Racism, CD #52.

Results:

- 142 yes
- 1 no
- 2 abstain

APPROVED Resolution to Promote Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) efforts in AASL while Addressing Historical Effects of Racism, CD #52.

Resolution Calling on the US Executive Branch to Drop Espionage Act Charges Against Julian Assange, CD #53

Councilor Tara Brady read the following resolved clause:

RESOLVED, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members, calls on the US executive branch to cease all efforts to extradite and prosecute Julian Assange.

Councilor Brady noted that Julian Assange is being prosecuted for espionage for publishing documents which are called the 'collateral murder video' that revealed acts by the U.S. military in Iraq. Publishing is not espionage by any reasonable definition of the word. The U.S. government should look to its own internal practices, learn from what was revealed in the document leaks and take responsibility going forward rather than continuing to prosecute those who blew the whistle. The resolution has been submitted to the Intellectual Freedom Committee, but they did not have quorum and were not able to take any action.

Councilor Kari Mitchell noted a struggle with the resolution as publication should not be considered espionage and concerns regarding how ALA involved should be on this issue, given other issues surrounding Assange, including a child abuse scandal.

Councilor Brady clarified that Assange had been wanted under suspicion of rape in Sweden, but the charges in Sweden have been dropped. The charges are separate from the espionage charges in the United States, which reflect a frightening principle.

Councilor John DeSantis expressed concern that passing the resolution will be interpreted as ALA glorifying Assange.

Councilor Jennifer Boettcher asked if the Committee on Legislation has reviewed the resolution and/or provided feedback. Councilor Brady noted the resolution was not sent to the Committee on Legislation, as this is an executive branch issue and not legislation.

Councilor Nick Teppi expressed concern about this resolution in light of the resolution just passed regarding standing up for youth services librarians, which is going to involve a lot of discussions with legislators. Additionally, there are real concerns about the actions of our government infringing on intellectual freedom, but other organizations are better positioned than ALA to take action that is meaningful regarding this specific issue.

Councilor Lisa Scroggins asked if the resolution could be amended to include at the end of the resolved

clause “with regard to the espionage charges against him?” Councilor Brady agreed to the language change, and President Wong referred that to Executive Director Tracie Hall for housekeeping changes.

Councilor Peter Coyle expressed concerns about the broad nature of resolved clause. Adding information to the end is more than housekeeping and substantially changes the effect of the resolution. The language should be reflected as an amendment. Additionally, ALA should not be making a public stance about what meets the legal definition of espionage, as it is not an expert.

Councilor Erin Dobbs noted that Council approves the call for supporting library workers when they are accused of being pornographers and will vocal support of Assange, whether widely viewed correctly or incorrectly viewed as a sexual predator, undercut efforts around intellectual freedom?

Councilor Mike Marlin acknowledged the difficulty of this decision and noted that several times in Council, there has been real reticence to go against the government party line. There is a lot of information about whether or not these espionage charges are in fact real or were invented. Despite all of that, Council can stand up for its principle.

Councilor Dobbs reiterated that ALA must consider what it wishes to accomplish legislatively when making calls on government. It would be beneficial for this to be vetted by the Washington office and/or appropriate groups, especially given the many issues surrounding Assange as an individual.

Councilor Dobbs moved to refer CD #53 to the Committee on Legislation (COL) and Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) and report back to Council at Annual 2022. Councilor Sarah Dobbs seconded

Councilor Stephanie Chase spoke against the referral, as the motion was presented just before the vote was called. Council should entertain the original motion now rather than waiting for it to come back to Council.

President Wong called for a vote on Motion to Refer CD #52 to the Committee on Legislation (COL) and Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) and report back to Council at Annual 2022.

Results:

- 39 yes
- 98 no
- 6 abstain

DEFEATED Motion to Refer CD #52 to the Committee on Legislation (COL) and Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) and report back to Council at Annual 2022.

President Wong called for a vote on the original Resolution Calling on the US Executive Branch to Drop Espionage Act Charges Against Julian Assange, CD #53

Results:

- 13 yes

- 119 no
- 9 abstain

DEFEATED Resolution Calling on the US Executive Branch to Drop Espionage Act Charges Against Julian Assange, CD #53

Transforming ALA Governance (TAG), CD #35a-c

President Wong noted that the discussion will focus specifically on CD #35b, Action Item 3 revised.

TAG Taskforce Chair Amy Lappin provided a brief refresher on the charge of TAG, as well as TAG discussions and actions at the January virtual Council meetings. At those meetings, consensus was found in the following areas:

- Council would prefer a one body model
- Voted to accept, in concept, six guiding principles regarding function, relying on a mechanism (Taking ALA's Pulse or TAP) to get regular and timely input from ALA members and units to ALA leadership
- Voted to accept, in concept, seven guiding principles regarding culture, including identifying ways that governance can be more effective in our work and guide us to meaningful discussions that assist in advancing the priorities of the association
- Appears to be consensus that regardless of function, Council will benefit from reducing the number of counselors
- Discussion of the composition and size of the Council and Executive Board, along with other action items, will be held via a series of meetings to be convened by TAG in the months leading up to the Annual Conference in June

TAG is bringing forward a revised document, ALA CD #35b, Action Item 3 revised for debate. Edits were made from the original motion to clarify the process and indicate that Council voted in January to remain as one leadership body rather than four assemblies. CD #35b, Action Item 3 revised reads:

Moved, That the TAG Task Force's mandate be extended until the ALA Council determines that its work has been completed, that the motion on the ALA governance structure that was included in part C of the TAG Taskforce's report (as amended by Council) be sent back to the Taskforce for further consideration, and that the TAG Taskforce be directed to proceed as follows:

1. Arrange to have a virtual Council Meetings scheduled for March, April and May 2022, with the purpose of continuing the discussion of the TAG Task Force's recommendations;
2. Direct, That, in preparation for the virtual Council meetings, the TAG Task Force develop and present for Council's consideration its proposed composition of a reduced size ALA Council, functioning as an advisory body, and that the TAG Task Force also present options for the proposed composition of the new ALA Executive Board;
3. Direct, That, in preparation for the virtual Council meetings, the TAG Task Force prepare, for Council's consideration, ideas to advance the implementation of the 'Taking ALA Pulse' (TAP) concept, as a method of bringing feedback and issues from ALA Members, Units and Affiliates

- for Council's consideration in its potentially added role as a Body of Knowledge;
4. Direct that the Committee on Organization review the standing committee structure and charges in light of the new ALA Governance function, culture, and structure;
 5. Direct, That, in preparation for the virtual Council meetings, the TAG Taskforce present, for Council's consideration, measures that could promote the culture for the effective functioning of ALA Council, with such measures including, but not limited to, improvements to the Council agenda development process, Council evaluation tools, Exit interviews, and more.

TAG's recommendation is that Council would best serve the association as an advisory body. Council could take on a greater role in discussing and debating relevant and timely issues without getting bogged down in procedure. The Executive Board already has fiduciary responsibilities and frequently acts on behalf of Council, and in most organizations the fiduciary and policy responsibilities reside in the same body. TAG recommends a model with Council acting as an advisory body to make recommendations and craft policy for Board consideration.

President Wong called for debate on the action item.

Councilor Lisa Scroggins spoke against the process of the resolution, rather than the actual content. Membership should be notified of a change of this magnitude, perhaps via survey or announcement with an opportunity for them to provide feedback.

Chair Lappin noted that the various interactions of work groups examining ALA governance, especially SCOE and Forward Together, did actively solicit membership feedback. Additionally, any changes made by Council will also go before a membership vote in the future. The action today would move the process along but would not mean any irreversible changes.

Councilor Stephanie Chase spoke in favor of the resolution and emphasized the importance to vote on the resolution today to determine if Council will be advisory or policy-making. Member feedback over the past few years has indicated that they do not understand Council or find it effective. If Council really does represent our members, then we need to listen to them. They want policy making to be consistent and consolidated, and Council should not continually push this decision down the line.

Councilor Eileen Palmer spoke against this resolution, noting that a governing Council is more important than ever to sustaining a truly member-driven and engaged association. Council needs to be fixed and should vote to retain its governing authority, turning its attention immediately to how to exercise that authority in a more responsible and effective way. A move to a small governing body moves ALA away from its growing democratic approach. It may be more efficient, but it is less inclusive with less accountability.

Councilor Katie Stover spoke in favor of this resolution, and as a first term as an ALA Councilor, does not feel in that tenure in Council has made any policy changes that a more streamlined advisory body could not make. Council should not continue postponing these actions.

Councilor Mike Marlin moved to substitute 'policy-making body' in clause 2 for 'advisory body,' and

replace 'potentially added' in clause 3 with 'currently and potentially strengthened.' Councilor Mario Gonzalez seconded. CD #35b Action Item 3 revised amendment reads:

Moved, That the TAG Task Force's mandate be extended until the ALA Council determines that its work has been completed, that the motion on the ALA governance structure that was included in part C of the TAG Taskforce's report (as amended by Council) be sent back to the Taskforce for further consideration, and that the TAG Taskforce be directed to proceed as follows:

1. Arrange to have a virtual Council Meetings scheduled for March, April and May 2022, with the purpose of continuing the discussion of the TAG Task Force's recommendations;
2. Direct, That, in preparation for the virtual Council meetings, the TAG Task Force develop and present for Council's consideration its proposed composition of a reduced size ALA Council, functioning as an ~~advisory~~ **policy-making body**, and that the TAG Task Force also present options for the proposed composition of the new ALA Executive Board;
3. Direct, That, in preparation for the virtual Council meetings, the TAG Task Force prepare, for Council's consideration, ideas to advance the implementation of the 'Taking ALA Pulse' (TAP) concept, as a method of bringing feedback and issues from ALA Members, Units and Affiliates for Council's consideration in its ~~potentially added~~ **current and potentially strengthened** role as a Body of Knowledge;
4. Direct that the Committee on Organization review the standing committee structure and charges in light of the new ALA Governance function, culture, and structure;
5. Direct, That, in preparation for the virtual Council meetings, the TAG Taskforce present, for Council's consideration, measures that could promote the culture for the effective functioning of ALA Council, with such measures including, but not limited to, improvements to the Council agenda development process, Council evaluation tools, Exit interviews, and more.

Councilor Marlin spoke in favor of retaining a governing Council but with restructuring as necessary, including size and representation.

President Wong opened discussion on the amendment.

Councilor Tara Brady spoke in favor of the amendment, having not seen evidence that membership wishes Council to go away, but rather it has concerns about what a smaller and more verified governing body will that do that is already too reluctant to address rank and file concerns. It is also reasonable, in light of the financial issues of a few years ago, to give Executive Board broad authority to act quickly on financial issues and bring actions to Council to review when necessary, but this should not overrule Council on policy matters. Council could also function more effectively by leaning into virtual participation. Once we put this policy making authority in the hands of a few, we are unlikely to get it back.

Councilor Nick Teppi spoke against the amendment and acknowledged concerns about ensuring a diversity of voices. However, council should not be preserved as a policy making body, citing constituent feedback that Council is bogged down in the minutiae of governance. We can and should ensure that

the new executive body is representative and diverse.

Councilor Mario Gonzalez spoke in favor of the amendment, noting council can be a policy making body and an advisory body at the same time, rather than assigning policy-making to a handful of members.

Councilor Jack Martin spoke against the amendment, noting that the concerns that there is not support for an advisory body is not reflected in the past several years of work through SCOE and Forward Together. This seems a sudden change after several years of work. Additionally, the current structure is not necessarily representative; the current structure actually dilutes individual and underrepresented voices. A governing board would move our organization forward. Councilor Martin noted he will be stepping off Council this June after having served for eight years and invited any other counselors who have served longer than their two terms to step back and let new voices in.

President Wong asked for Council's permission to let Member and Past President Betty Turock address Council. There were no objections.

Past President Turock noted that in the past, high level decision making often occurred in closed meetings, committee membership was often controlled, and leadership very centralized. ALA was reorganized with top down approaches supplemented with representative input. The structure and governance of ALA reflected slow but significant progress in democratization. Change over time demands change in ALA, but we must consistently guard against a reversal of ALA's hard fought focus on democratization.

Councilor Matt Beckstrom spoke in favor of the amendment, noting that after reading information and discussing with members, he is in agreement that Council is unwieldy. Council should remain a policy making body, but changes are needed.

Councilor Amber Williams spoke against the amendment, noting that much of the information, for example SCOE reports, are out of date because Council has moved so slowly on this process. Council has not allowed a decision to move forward. Council should vote no on this amendment and yes on the original motion in order to move this forward to membership for change.

Councilor Bob Diaz spoke in favor of the amendment. Nine people on an Executive Board is not enough for decision making. It is the right thing to retain ALA Council as a policy making body, while also considering how to improve it.

Councilor Tina Thomas spoke against the amendment, reiterating that a larger body does not necessarily make it more representative. One way to ensure that there is more representation with different perspectives is to have term limits. There are ways that policy-making bodies gather information and help make informed decisions, such as committees and groups of experts who do research and provide advice and recommendations, with decision making and fiduciary responsibility in a single executive group. Two workgroups did significant research and came back with recommendations, and it is not good governance to ignore them.

Councilor Jennifer Boettcher noted, as a member of the Forward Together Resolution Working Group (FTWG), that TAG presents a different recommendation than FTWG, which outlined Council as decision making body. Councilor Boettcher is voting for the amendment.

President Wong called a vote for CD #35b Action Item 3 revised amendment.

Results:

- 66 yes
- 69 no
- 8 abstain

DEFEATED CD #35b Action Item 3 revised amendment.

President Wong called for debate on the original motion, CD #35b Action Item 3 revised.

Councilor Kari Mitchell asked about the Taking ALA's Pulse (TAP) process, because many councilors have expressed a lack of feedback from membership despite the references to past work, which is a number of years old.

Chair Lappin noted that the charge of transforming ALA governance was not to create membership surveys. It was to take the information thus far and create recommendations on how to operationalize those findings into actionable items ready for a vote. TAP will look into conversations about the details – such as composition and size, effectiveness, and oversight and communication with membership.

President Wong asked Parliamentarian Mina to briefly reiterate the process after voting.

Parliamentarian Mina noted the next step is to vote on the original motion. Even if the motion is adopted, it does not mean that Council becomes an advisory body today. There are still steps needed in order to adopt and produce amendments to the bylaws.

Councilor Rodney Lippard asked if there is a way to remove clause 2, which seems to be the biggest point of contention, and consider the remaining points.

Chair Lappin agreed to remove Clause 2 to be considered separately. President Wong asked for approval by consent to remove clause 2 for separate consideration. There were objections to the removal.

Parliamentarian Mina advised that two options were possible: 1. vote on the full original motion or 2. Vote on clause 2, followed by a vote on each remaining clause.

Councilor Peter Coyle called for a point of clarification. Nothing in this motion says that Council must accept the proposal that will be presented. TAG can do this work and present proposals for moving forward, which council will accept or not.

President Wong asked Council if there were any objections to voting on the entire motion as moved by TAG, CD #35b Action Item 3 revised. There were no objections.

President Wong called for a vote on CD #35b, Action Item 3 revised.

Result:

- 83 yes
- 50 no
- 3 abstain

APPROVED CD #35b, Action Item 3 revised.

President Wong proposed that Resolution Related to Structure, Composition, Purpose, and Meetings of ALA Council, ALA CD #54, be moved as an agenda item for the next Council meeting due to time constraints. Councilor Jennifer Boettcher, the mover, agreed.

President Wong adjourned the meeting.