

ALA PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY
Six-month Report to Board and Council
January 5, 2023

FEDERAL LEGISLATION AND POLICY UPDATES

LIBRARY FUNDING

Success for Library Funding in FY 2023 Appropriations

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Congressional appropriations cycle concluded hours before expiration of the December 24 continuing resolution with a 4,100-page FY 2023 Omnibus Spending Bill, which included welcome increases in library funding. The leading source of federal funding for America's libraries, the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) saw an increase of \$13.5 million, raising the program to \$211 million. In addition, the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) program, designed to support school library literacy initiatives, saw a \$1 million increase, bringing total funding to \$30 million for the Department of Education program. Highlights for libraries in the Omnibus Appropriations bill include:

Direct Library Funding:

- Institute of Museum and Library Services +\$26.8 million
 - LSTA +\$13.5 million
 - LSTA Grant to States +\$11.2 million
 - LSTA Native American and Native Hawaiian Library Services +\$0.5 million
- Innovative Approaches to Literacy (Dept. of Education) +\$1 million

Federal Library and Library-Eligible Funding (selected activities):

- Education Title IV +\$100 million
- Education Title II for professional development +\$20 million
- Comprehensive Literacy State Grants +\$2 million
- National Library of Medicine +\$18 million
- Library of Congress +\$30 million
- National Endowment for the Arts +\$23.6 million
- National Endowment for the Humanities +\$20.7 million

FY 2023 appropriations law voices support for library facilities

For fiscal year 2023, ALA included a new funding request for Congress to allocate at least \$20 million for a new national program for improving library facilities, inspired by the Build America's Libraries Act (S. 127/H.R. 1581). On June 30, the House Appropriations committee approved its FY23 bills, which did not include the requested funding, but included language expressing concern about the condition of library facilities and supporting efforts to assess the condition of library facilities. On July 28, the Senate Appropriations Committee released draft FY23 bills that did include the requested funding for library facilities. On October 27, more than 50 Representatives [signed a letter, which was supported by ALA](#), urging the House to agree to the Senate's funding for library facilities. On December 23, Congress passed, and on December 29 President Biden signed, the final FY23 appropriations law, which did not include the requested funding for library facilities, but did include the language supporting efforts to assess the condition of library facilities.

NEW SUPPORT FOR LIBRARIES

ALA, AASL lead support for Right to Read Act

Legislation supporting the work of school librarians was the objective of Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) and Representative Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ-03) who in October introduced the Right to Read Act ([S. 5064](#) and [H.R. 9056](#)). The Right to Read Act is designed to ensure all students, including low-income and minority students, children with disabilities, and English language learners, have access to an effective school library staffed by a certified school librarian. The act would increase student access to fully staffed and appropriately resourced school libraries and authorizes funding to meet these needs. The legislation also supports recruitment, retention and professional development for state-certified school librarians. [Senator Reed's press release](#) announcing the bill's introduction included a quote from ALA President Lessa Pelayo-Lozada.

Senator Reed and Rep. Grijalva's legislation also reaffirms that First Amendment rights apply to school libraries, in response to the growing trend of book bans, which limit appropriate educational options for students. In addition, the Right to Read Act would extend liability protections to teachers and school librarians.

ALA launched a "thank you" campaign urging school librarian champions to sign a virtual thank you card to Senator Reed and Representative Grijalva. More than 3,000 advocates signed onto the thank you. PPA staff arranged for a group of DC area school librarians to deliver the signatures in person to the staffs of Senator Reed & Representative Grijalva.

In December, a local thank you was delivered when a group of Rhode Island school and public librarians met with Senator Reed to deliver their thanks. A similar meeting was held with Arizona school librarians and Representative Grijalva.

Adult Education WORKS Act leverages public libraries for workforce development

The bipartisan Adult Education Workforce Opportunity and Reskilling for Knowledge and Success Act (Adult Education WORKS Act), introduced by Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Todd Young (R-IN) in December 2022, will address workforce challenges by updating the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to strengthen and expand access to adult education services. The legislation would increase funding for adult education and strengthen coordination across adult education and workforce programs. Highlights of S. 5202 include expanding the role of public libraries in the one-stop delivery system for workforce development; ensuring that adult education providers are represented on workforce boards; authorizing a doubling of adult education funding by 2026; and incorporating digital and information literacy into adult education and workforce development programs. Among other provisions, the bill would also provide support for college and career navigators at public libraries and community-based organizations.

ALA has worked with Senate offices to ensure that Adult Education WORKS Act will leverage the [reach, expertise and resources](#) of America's public libraries to boost college and career readiness and expand economic opportunity and mobility for millions of people. A [press release](#) from Senator Jack Reed highlighted a supporting quote from ALA President Lessa Pelayo-Lozada.

DIGITAL CONTENT

ALA continues work with library and publishing ecosystem

Engagement on digital books advocacy continues as several states are gearing up to introduce legislation in 2023. ALA prepared a report for library advocates interested in state legislation, which may be requested from PPA directly (it is not publicly posted anywhere). ALA staff also discussed directions and

prospects for digital book advocacy at a DPLA webinar and ALA Chapter Exchange webinar. An ALA delegation met with representatives from a number of organizations in the publishing ecosystem in New York City this fall, reaffirming relationships. For many, this was the first in-person interaction in several years because of the pandemic.

DIGITAL INCLUSION

ALA releases digital equity report

ALA's new digital equity report, [released](#) in October, outlines how policymakers can scale library successes to advance digital equity. Authored by PPA consultant Michelle Frisque, [Leveraging Libraries to Advance Digital Equity](#), the report included examples and lessons learned from conversations at ALA's June 2022 Broadband Convening, supported by the Mellon Foundation. The report was highlighted in [GovTech magazine](#) as well as in [Benton Institute for Broadband and Society headlines](#) and [blog](#). Megan Janicki spoke about the report at the November Chapter Advocacy Exchange.

ALA leader reappointed to the board of the Universal Service Administrative Corporation

The Federal Communications Commission reappointed Amber Gregory, Arkansas State Library, as a board member of the Universal Service Administrative Corporation, which oversees the E-rate program and other Universal Service Fund programs. ALA formally [recommended](#) Amber for reappointment, as endorsed by ALA's E-rate Task Force.

ALA promotes FCC grants for library outreach on affordable connectivity program

Following the FCC's notice of funding opportunities in November, PPA wrote a [blog post](#) for PLA and [fact sheet](#) with information for libraries about applying for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) Outreach Grants. To promote the funding opportunity, PPA hosted an [Instagram Live Q&A](#) about the ACP, with President Lessa Pelayo-Lozada moderating the discussion. Guest speakers – Liz Gabbitas, Digital Access and Education Program Manager at the Utah State Library, and Evan Marwell, CEO of Education SuperHighway – provided insights for libraries as they consider applying for ACP Outreach grant funds. The event has had nearly 1,000 views.

ALA supports the Digital Equity Foundation Act

ALA endorsed the Digital Equity Foundation Act, legislation introduced by Senator Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.) and Representative Doris Matsui (D-CA-7), to establish a nonprofit foundation that would leverage public and private investments to advance digital equity. A [press release issued by the cosponsors](#) quoted ALA President Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada: "The Digital Equity Foundation Act of 2022 introduced by Senator Lujan and Representative Matsui would invest in often overlooked parts of the digital divide: the internet user and the trusted institutions that connect and empower users to fully participate online. Ongoing funding for digital literacy and inclusion must accompany basic access to the internet. The American Library Association is proud to support legislation that would allow libraries to do on a larger scale what they have always done: provide people access to the opportunities that the internet promises." The proposed funding stream for the Digital Equity Act is spectrum auction proceeds from the Federal Communications Commission. The authorization for spectrum auctions was extended to March 2023, so this issue continues to be in play.

ALA endorses Tribal Connect Act

In October [Senators Heinrich, Luján and Hoeven introduced](#) the Tribal Connect Act of 2022 to make it easier for Tribes to secure high-speed internet access at Tribally-owned public institutions through the FCC's Universal Service Fund (USF) but outside and additionally to the Schools and Libraries Program (E-

rate). Companion legislation was [introduced in the House](#) in November by Representative Teresa Leger Fernández. Among other things, the Tribal Connect Act builds on ALA's work to update the FCC's definition of "library" (which went into effect in January 2022), providing clarity regarding the eligibility of Tribal libraries and promoting increased participation of underrepresented Tribal libraries in the E-Rate Program.

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

ALA-supported Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act becomes law

On December 23, President Biden signed into law the Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act, which was incorporated as a provision of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (H.R. 7776). ALA had supported the Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act over several years (for instance, [in this November 2021 letter](#)). The law requires the Government Publishing Office (GPO) to create an online database for free public access to reports that agencies are required to submit to Congress and requires agencies to provide copies of those reports to GPO for that purpose.

STATE AND LOCAL ADVOCACY

PPA coordinates ALA support for state advocacy in collaboration with Chapter Relations Office, Office for Intellectual Freedom and other 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.

Librarians across the country faced an unprecedented number of adverse state bills that would effectively ban or restrict access to materials. During 2022, PPA and OIF monitored more than 65 bills and shared information with our state partners. Where requested, ALA provided direct assistance, including strategic guidance, talking points and tailored support. While the vast majority of bills did not pass, legislation of concern did pass in a few states including: Florida ([HB 1557](#), [HB 1467](#)), Missouri ([SB 775](#)), and Tennessee ([HB 2666](#)). PPA is working closely with the Office for Intellectual Freedom, Chapter Relations and other offices to support ALA chapters in 2023, which will be busy for state legislatures, particularly with the return to session for Texas and other states that meet biannually.

As part of the Unite Against Book Bans campaign (see separate report), PPA staff developed and published [Empowered by Reading: The benefits of giving youth access to a wide variety of reading materials](#) during Banned Books Week in September. Examining research conducted by experts in literacy, education, child development and related fields, the paper underscores the benefits to individuals and communities of providing children and youth with a wide variety of developmentally appropriate reading materials.

At the request of local advocates and in coordination with state partners, PPA submitted letters of support for school libraries on behalf of ALA President Lessa Pelayo-Lozada and AASL President Kathy Lester to school districts in Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania.

In addition, PPA provided direct assistance on a range of issues to library advocates across the country, including in Arizona, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, South Carolina, Texas and Utah.

OTHER POLICY-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

ALA advocates for resources to promote library sustainability

PPA has continued to advocate for federal resources to improve the sustainability of library facilities. On June 2, ALA joined a coalition letter to Congressional leaders in support of legislative proposals to improve the energy efficiency of buildings. On December 22, ALA submitted comments to the Energy Department regarding energy efficiency funding for nonprofit buildings.

ALA voices concern about overbroad “harmful to minors” legislation

On November 28, ALA signed a coalition letter in opposition to the Kids Online Safety Act (S. 3663). As written, the bill would have required online platforms to restrict minors’ access to content deemed “harmful to minors,” a standard that was vaguely and broadly written and which raised concerns that it could include, for instance, LGBTQ information. The bill’s rules would have applied to some library online services, including online content licensed from commercial vendors. Following outreach by PPA, a revised version of the legislation was released which would have clarified the bill’s standards and excluded most library services from its applicability. The bill did not advance prior to the end of the 117th Congress and therefore died with the end of that Congress.

Congressmembers voice concern about proliferation of book bans

In late 2022, Members of Congress introduced two resolutions expressing concern about the increasing efforts to ban books around the United States. On September 22, during Banned Books Week, Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD) and cosponsors introduced H.Res. 1392, “Recognizing ‘Banned Books Week’ and the sweeping attacks on books in the United States today, acknowledging the central role books play in promoting democratic and civil discourse, and urging recognition of the illegitimate tactics being used to ban books in K-12 classrooms, universities, prisons, and libraries.” Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) and cosponsors introduced a companion resolution, S.Res. 838, on November 17. ALA supported both resolutions.

ALA endorses Summer Meals and Learning Act

In July, Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) introduced [S. 4578](#) and Representative Joe Morelle (D-NY) and Rep. Katko (R-NY) introduced [H.R. 8429](#) which were endorsed by ALA. These bills would authorize operating grants to school libraries which have early reading programs and summer lunch programs. No further action was taken on the bills.

ALA welcomes reinstated President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities

ALA [welcomed](#) President Biden’s Executive Order on Promoting the Arts, the Humanities, and Museum and Library Services, announced on October 1. The Executive Order establishes the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities within the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to “inform and support the national engagement with Americans necessary to advance the arts, the humanities and museum and library services.” The Committee will work directly with the Biden Administration and three cultural agencies: IMLS, the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities as well as with other federal entities. The order reinstates the committee, which had previously existed prior to 2017.

COMMENTS AND AMICUS BRIEFS FILED

- [Coalition letter to Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona](#) in support of proposed Title IX rulemaking regarding sex-based discrimination (September 12, 2022)
- September 21 [Comments of the American Library Association to the FCC](#) advocating for the inclusion of comprehensive security tools on the list of eligible services under E-rate

- September 30 Comments of the American Library Association related to development of the ACP Outreach Grant Program, WC-Docket 21-450 (Archive link: <http://hdl.handle.net/11213/19256>)
- October 14 Comments filed on the Draft report of the Task Force on a Digital Federal Depository Library Program (Archive link: <http://hdl.handle.net/11213/19258>)
- [December 1 Library Copyright Alliance comments](#) on notice of proposed rulemaking: Termination rights and the Music Modernization Act's blanket license

LETTERS SUBMITTED

- September 21 School Districts Coalition Letter to FCC Regarding use of E-Rate Funds to Support Cybersecurity (Archive link: <http://hdl.handle.net/11213/18887>)
- [September 23 Letter to the Senate Homeland Security & Government Affairs Committee](#) supporting the confirmation of Dr. Colleen Shogan as Archivist of the United States
- October 5 [Letter in Support of Passing the Students' Right to Read Amendment Act of 2021](#)
- Letter Supporting Re-Appointment of Dr. Daniel A. Domenech to the Universal Service Administrative Company Board of Directors (Archive link: <http://hdl.handle.net/11213/19254>)
- October 24 Letter to North Allegheny School District Superintendent in Opposition to Proposals to Cut School Librarian Staff (Archive link: <http://hdl.handle.net/11213/19257>)
- October 27 Coalition [Letter to Congressional leadership](#) calling for \$1 billion in additional appropriation for the FCC's Emergency Connectivity Fund
- Coalition Letter in Support of Renewal of FCC Spectrum Auction Authority (Archive link: <http://hdl.handle.net/11213/19220>)
- Letter to Chairwoman Rosenworcel Regarding Citizens Broadband Radio Service (Archive link: <http://hdl.handle.net/11213/19223>)
- November 8 Coalition letter to all members of Congress calling for cosponsors of the EDUCATORS for America Act (S. 3360/H.R. 6205) introduced by Senator Reed & Rep. Adams (Archive link: <http://hdl.handle.net/11213/19275>)
- November 18 Coalition Letter Opposing S. 3663's Threats to Minors Privacy and Safety Online (Archive link: <http://hdl.handle.net/11213/19224>)
- November 21 Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Coalition Letter urging President Biden to extend the PSLF waiver (Archive link: <http://hdl.handle.net/11213/19274>)
- November 29 Title IV-A Coalition letter to Congressional Appropriation leaders urging increased funding for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment education program (Archive link: <http://hdl.handle.net/11213/19276>)

ADVOCACY OUTREACH

ALA organizes “We Can Do This” awareness event with the White House

On August 4, 2022, ALA held a media publicity event to recognize librarians' efforts in providing information regarding COVID-19 vaccines. The event was organized as part of PPA's partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' “We Can Do This” campaign to share trusted information about COVID-19 vaccines with parents and families with children. The event was organized in coordination with the Prince George's County (MD) Memorial Library System, which hosted a pediatric vaccination clinic and media event with Cameron Webb, MD, Senior Advisor to the White House COVID-19 Response. Maria McCauley, president of the Public Library Association and Library Director of the Cambridge (MA) Public Library, and Nick Brown, Acting Co-CEO, Prince George's County

Memorial Library System, also made remarks about the importance of libraries in the nation's community-driven public health approach to fighting COVID.

The event took place at the Hyattsville Branch Library, weeks after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized a COVID vaccine for children six months through 5 years of age. The event was centered on a theme of health equity and diverse family audience accessibility, with Spanish language and American Sign Language translation throughout the storytime and media conference immediately following. A dance party for children featured Latin style dance and Spanish-language sing-along. The event resulted in media coverage in several news outlets, including [The Washington Post](#), [NBC4 Washington](#), [Univision](#), and [El Tiempo Latino](#).

ALA sends letter of concern to FBI regarding threats of violence in libraries

On September 27, the ALA executive board transmitted a letter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) expressing concerns about the threats directed to public and school libraries and library workers. PPA subsequently conducted outreach to the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice regarding these concerns. PPA and Office for Intellectual Freedom staff spoke with the FBI regarding these threats and were informed that an arrest had been made in a related case.

ALA promotes civic engagement pre-midterm elections and proactive advocacy after voting

Prior to the 2022 midterm elections, PPA published an updated voter engagement guide and again participated as a premier partner of National Voter Registration Day along with hundreds of libraries signing up to observe this civic holiday introduced by Nonprofit VOTE. PPA also promoted resources and events of allied civic organizations, including Tuft University CIRCLE's Growing Voters report, National Vote Early Day and Vote Riders voter ID information and resources available to libraries. PPA staff also weighed in on the role of libraries and civic engagement for AASL's *Knowledge Quest* article, "The Front Line of Civic Engagement" (November/December issue). Following the election results, PPA reported to ALA members on election outcomes in a memo from President Pelayo-Lozada and in the December 15 [ALA Connect Live program](#). To support ALA's state partners in preparing for upcoming legislative sessions, PPA hosted a Chapter Advocacy Exchange "[Gearing up for 2023.](#)"

ALA releases Libraries Build Business program impact report

ALA's [Libraries Build Business Initiative Highlights](#) report, [released](#) in September 2022, showcases the impact of the Libraries Build Business initiative on entrepreneurs, local communities and the library profession. [Libraries Build Business](#), a \$2 million national initiative supported by Google.org, launched in early 2020 and culminated with the [release](#) of the Libraries Build Business Playbook in February 2022. The insights, lessons, and outcomes from this initiative can be leveraged for further impact on economic opportunity and advancement in communities across the United States.

PPA hosts Policy Corps IV cohort to Washington, D.C.

In early November, PPA hosted the fourth cohort of Policy Corps members for a two-day in-person training that covered copyright and licensing, advocating for library facilities funding, and working with the media and staying on message. The cohort also began planning for individual and small-group advocacy activities in 2023.

PPA welcomes new COL members in virtual orientation

In September, PPA staff provided new COL members with an in-depth orientation on federal policy issues, PPA staffing and PPA resources available to members. For new members, the event was their

first time to meet (virtually) PPA staff, learn about their role as a COL member, and receive updates on the many policy issues that COL members will encounter.

COL fall retreat returns to in-person format

The Committee on Legislation held its annual two-day Fall Retreat, the first in-person retreat since 2019. The retreat provided COL members an opportunity to hear from outside ALA speakers and PPA staff on a wide range of important policy activities, as well as providing opportunities for members to provide advice to PPA staff and socialize. ALA President Lessa Pelayo-Lozada attended a portion of the retreat to welcome members and thank them for their service.

Outside speakers included John Windhausen (leading a discussion on telecom and broadband), Elyse Wasch (recap and implications of recent federal elections), Senator Jack Reed staffer Moira Lenehan (Right to Read Act), and Jonathan Band (Copyright and eBooks). Members also received PPA updates on office changes, communication, messaging and grassroots tools, Committee on Library Advocacy (COLA) updates and outreach to newly elected members of Congress.

COL members continued discussion of the 2023 COL Federal Legislative and Public Policy Agenda and provided final approval. The agenda is focused on four key areas: Funding; Digital Inclusion and Skills; Copyright, Licensing and Competition; and Government Information and Services.

PPA staff speaking engagements included:

July

- Megan Janicki spoke at an Iran Public Libraries Foundation webinar, [“The Role of Public Libraries in Small Businesses”](#)

September

- Megan Cusick and Shawnda Hines presented Advocacy Academy to Minitex, Minnesota’s information and resource sharing program
- Megan Janicki presented the Libraries Build Business program along with cohort members at the New Jersey State Library’s virtual [NJLibsGrowBiz Summit](#)
- Megan Cusick, along with OIF, co-delivered a keynote presentation, “Books Under Fire: The Right to Read in 2022,” at Ohio Library Council’s annual conference
- Alan Inouye was a panelist at the annual Digital Public Library of America conference

October

- Megan Janicki presented [How Libraries Strengthen Small Business Communities](#) at the Candid.org Network Days
- Shawnda Hines gave the keynote address at the West Virginia Library Association conference

November

- Alan Inouye and Megan Cusick were featured in the [inaugural episode](#) of San Jose State University (SJSU) School of Information’s Advocacy Podcast with iSchool Director Anthony Chow
- Megan Cusick joined state librarian Stephanie Bailey-White (ID) for a continuing education panel sponsored by COSLA, “Recent Trends in Library Collections”
- Megan Cusick presented to North Carolina Library Association’s executive board and advocacy section, “Starting Now: Preparing for the 2023 Legislative Session”
- Megan Janicki spoke at the EntreLib (ELC) International virtual conference: [Libraries Build Business: Resources to Support Your Library in Building or Expanding an Entrepreneurship Program](#)

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