

Written Testimony of

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Before the United States House of Representatives

Committee on House Administration

Transforming GPO for the 21st Century and Beyond: Part 3 – Federal Depository Library Program

September 26, 2017

Chairman Harper, Ranking Member Brady, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony about the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) and Title 44 of the U.S. Code. To ensure that information about our republic remains accessible to all Americans, we encourage the committee to develop legislation to modernize this important program.

Libraries help the public find, use, and understand government information. Through their decades-long partnership with the FDLP, libraries collect, catalog, preserve, and provide reference services to support a wide array of users, including business owners, the legal profession, researchers, students, and citizens. Federal publications distributed under the FDLP provide information on every topic from aviation safety to zoonotic diseases.

Title 44 is the framework that enables these essential activities, through a four-step process:

1. Agencies from all three branches of the federal government provide agency publications to the Government Publishing Office (GPO);
2. GPO's Superintendent of Documents catalogs the publications so that the public can find them;
3. The Superintendent makes the publications available to the public and libraries; and
4. Libraries collaborate to keep the publications broadly accessible over the long term.

This collective investment by the federal government and library partners represents both a historical resource and a vibrant service in nearly every Congressional district across the country. Today, 1,143 Federal Depository Libraries work together as a national network to keep Americans informed.

The FDLP's purpose – to ensure that Americans in every community can access information by and about their government, through a Federal-library partnership – remains vital. However, some aspects of the law have become so outdated that they now hinder the FDLP's continued ability to effectively serve its purpose. Nearly all of Title 44's provisions relating to GPO and the FDLP predate widespread Internet adoption, which has dramatically changed the practices of publishers, libraries, and information users. The law must evolve to accommodate these changes.

We encourage Congress to develop legislation to modernize Title 44. In particular, legislation should strengthen library partnerships, ensure the long-term preservation of government information, and improve the collection and distribution of digital publications. We recommend that legislation include the following principles:

*Strengthen library partnerships for public access to federal publications:* The law's requirements for FDLP libraries are overly specific, and some are outdated. Congress should streamline the law to reduce unnecessary burdens and remove barriers to collaboration. GPO should have greater flexibility to partner with libraries in order to best serve the public.

*Ensure the long-term preservation of federal publications:* To ensure that Americans can continue to access the documents of their government in the future, Congress should codify GPO's responsibility to preserve publications. Reform should recognize libraries' fundamental role in preservation by creating voluntary opportunities for new partnerships, without increasing mandatory burdens on depository libraries.

*Improve the collection and distribution of digital publications:* The FDLP was designed for the print era. Congress should update the law to more effectively collect digital government publications and disseminate them to libraries and the public.

To successfully modernize Title 44, we believe legislation should embrace these concepts while appropriately balancing the different interests of various stakeholders. We appreciate the committee's interest in modernizing the program, and we look forward to working with the committee to advance these aims. Thank you for your consideration of our views.

*The American Library Association (ALA) is the oldest and largest library association in the world, with more than 57,000 members in academic, public, school, government and special libraries. The mission of the American Library Association is to provide leadership for the development, promotion and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.*

*The Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) is an independent organization of the chief officers of state and territorial agencies designated as the state library administrative agency and responsible for statewide library development. Its purpose is to provide leadership on issues of common concern and national interest; to further state library agency relationships with*

*federal government and national organizations; and to initiate cooperative action for the improvement of library services to the people of the United States.*

*The Special Libraries Association (SLA), founded in 1909, is a nonprofit international organization for innovative information professionals and their strategic partners. SLA serves information professionals in more than 50 countries and in a range of working environments, including business, academia, and government agencies. SLA promotes and strengthens its members through learning, advocacy, and networking initiatives.*