

ALA American Library Association

January 11, 2019

The Honorable John Curtis
United States House of Representatives
2236 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Curtis,

On behalf of the 57,000 members of the American Library Association, I would like to commend you for your efforts to aid broadband deployment in rural and remote areas, including on tribal lands. ALA is pleased to support H.R. 292, the Rural Broadband Permitting Efficiency Act of 2019. Today's library services depend on fast and affordable broadband. From enabling small business development and distance education to providing healthcare information, to securing veterans' benefits, libraries across the U.S. offer their communities access to critical resources and programs.

Libraries that have high capacity broadband help their patrons secure jobs through video conferencing with prospective employers, keeping certifications up to date via online testing, and even driving a hydraulic excavator using simulation equipment and software. Students in remote areas have access to online AP courses not otherwise available in their schools and veterans can visit the library for telehealth consultations with a distant VA hospital. Services like these can be game changing and should be readily available regardless of geographical location. H.R. 292 is one more tool that will help level the playing field for the nation's rural and remote communities.

Small, rural libraries represent about half of all public libraries in the U.S. and in many of the communities they serve, the library is the only place to get online for free. Yet rural libraries often face the most significant challenges in securing the broadband capacity services like the examples mentioned above require. These challenges are especially acute for tribal libraries.

ALA supports streamlining the processes for broadband deployment in these hard-to-serve areas. H.R. 292 will help ensure the most rural communities are afforded the same opportunities as the rest of the U.S.

Sincerely,



Kathi Kromer
Associate Executive Director
Washington Office
American Library Association