

Much to anticipate—little to report

Since Congress went into recess in December, there is little new action to report. However, by the time you read this column, the second session of the 108th Congress will have already convened January 20, 2004.

Ending the first session

News reports across the country have described how first the House and then the Senate recessed before completing FY2004 Appropriations bills. Both the House and Senate did pass a continuing resolution that funded the federal government at prorated FY2003 appropriations levels through January 31, 2004.

Congress may pass the “mini-bus” bill that rolled into one the seven remaining, i.e., not voted upon, funding bills that include education funding of all types. A chart outlining the funding for key library programs is available at the ALA Web site at www.ala.org/washoff under “Issues” and “Funding.”

Efforts to add on bills as riders to FY2004 appropriations bills such as H.R. 1157, the Freedom to Read Protection Act, were unsuccessful. All of the bills that attempt to “fix” the USA PATRIOT Act, including those that address specific library concerns, will be key action items for grassroots lobbying by the library community.

Looking to the second session

Do not underrate the extreme importance of grassroots lobbying during this last half of the 108th Congress, which, you may have noticed, is also a presidential election year. Expect an extremely partisan approach to all issues. This will be especially evident with respect to funding for higher education, funding for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), PATRIOT Act amendments, and copyright bills

such as the database bill, H.R. 3261, which ALA opposes.

At this writing, the President’s proposed budget for FY2005 has not been released. ALA is seeking increased funding for LSTA of \$300 million to help support the needs of academic, school, and public libraries now encompassed in LSTA programs.

Please subscribe to ALAWON to stay up-to-date on federal legislative and policy issues. Instructions on subscribing to ALAWON can be found on the ALA Washington Office Web site at www.ala.org/washoff near the bottom of the page. Watch for and respond to “Action Alerts” calling for local advocacy, where messages from constituents will need to be very loud and very clear in order to secure increased funding for library and library-related programs in the current political environment.

Finally, plan on participating in National Library Legislative Day events on May 3 and 4, 2004, in Washington, D.C. Check with state chapters or contact the Legislative Day coordinator, Camille Bowman, at (800) 941-8478 or cbowman@alawash.org.

Also watch for recent publications from staff at the Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP). From the OITP bookshelf: Carrie Lowe, Internet policy specialist, along with her co-authors Michael B. Eisenberg and Kathleen L. Spitzer, wrote *Information Literacy: Essential Skills for the Information Age* (2004, Libraries Unlimited). Called “the definitive work on information literacy,” the book explores many facets of the concept, including its history, the economic perspective, K–12 education and standards, higher education, and more. *Information Literacy: Essential Skills for the Information Age* is available from Libraries Unlimited at www.lu.com.

Plus, librarians can anticipate the June release of *Complete Copyright: An Everyday Guide for Librarians* by Carrie Russell, ALA’s copyright specialist. ■

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