

## The first 100 days . . .

The first 100 days of the 104th Congress are completed and observers are debating whether it's the "end of the beginning" or the "beginning of the end." Some library programs survived the rescission process relatively intact but it is anticipated that the struggle will become much more difficult in the second 100 days.

### **Telecommunications reform:**

The 104th Congress has begun its efforts to modernize the Communications Act of 1934. The major emphasis has been to further deregulate the telecommunications industry and to maximize competition within the industry as a whole. Within that context, if and how libraries, education, and other public entities—and therefore, the public itself—are included is the subject of much debate.

**S. 652:** The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation approved on March 23 a draft bill that has now become S. 652. It is essentially the "discussion draft" that Committee Chair Larry Pressler (R-SD) circulated in January. Ranking minority member Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-SC) also circulated draft legislation.

It was reported that lengthy discussion between senate staffers had been taking place to try and develop a bipartisan telecommunications bill. Negotiations were only moderately successful when the committee proceeded with the markup as scheduled on language that was still being negotiated just hours before the committee work session.

**The Snowe-Rockefeller amendment:** At the markup an important amendment was introduced to support K-12 schools and libraries by Senators Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and Jay Rockefeller (D-WV). Their amendment would provide for K-12 schools, libraries, and rural health care providers to have universal access to the National Information Infrastructure (NII) at rates not more than the "incremental costs" of providing such services. At this point, librar-

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ies are not defined in the language and could be interpreted to be as broad as possible. In a close roll call vote, the committee accepted the amendment 10-8, with Snowe being the only Republican supporter.

ALA and many education groups have been working together to support this amendment and to track potential arguments against the provision. There is much contention about the amend-

ment and it is expected to be the subject of a motion to strike when the Senate considers it after the spring recess. All of this will be subject to lengthy debate when the Senate returns and the bill comes to the floor.

**The Exon-Gorton amendment:** Senators James Exon (D-NE) and Slade Gorton (R-WA) incorporated their bill, S. 314, with only slight variation, as an amendment to S. 652. The Communications Decency Act raises grave First Amendment questions. The Exon-Gorton amendment poses a significant threat to freedom of speech and the free flow of information on the NII.

It raises fundamental questions about the right of government to control content on communications networks by extending control of "obscene and harassing" use of telephone services to all telecommunications devices. ALA and others have advocated that this amendment be removed from the telecommunications legislation to be dealt with separately.

**The Leahy alternative:** Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) introduced an alternative to the Communications Decency Act on April 7. The Child Protection, User Empowerment, and Free Expression in Interactive Media Study Bill, S. 714, directs the Department of Justice, in consultation with the Commerce Department, to conduct a study to address technical means for empowering users to control information they receive over interactive communications systems.

Senators Robert Kerry (D-NE) and Herbert Kohl (D-WI) are cosponsors. In introducing this legislation, Leahy emphasized that ways must be found that do not invite invasions of privacy or lead to censorship of private online communications. Major support for the Leahy

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initiative will be necessary in the coming weeks for it to replace the Exon-Gorton proposal.

## Rescissions

**TIAP Grants:** Two major rescission packages, one in the House and one in the Senate, threatened the TIAP (Telecommunications Information Infrastructure Assistance Program) grants in the Department of Commerce. The TIAP grants are administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. Several were received by libraries or had libraries as partners in community and education coalitions that received awards last fall.

In FY94, \$24.4 million in grants was awarded. The original FY95 budget appropriated \$63 million. A conference committee on H.R. 889, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations and Rescission Act of 1995, approved rescission of \$15 million instead of the \$34 million that the Senate had proposed. An additional \$30 million was proposed to be rescinded from the TIAP grants in H.R. 1158. It is yet to be determined what the final cuts will be to the TIAP program in these rescissions.

**Library programs:** Before recessing, the Senate recommended a total of \$418.9 million in all education rescissions for the FY95 budget. Previously the House had recommended a \$1.7 billion rescission education package.

In library programs, the House supported rescission of all of the \$6.5 million in research and demonstration projects and all of the \$4.9 million for library education and training fellowships for library science students. The Senate, by comparison, supported only a \$2.9 million cut in the library education and training program. The Senate did not vote any rescissions for library construction and the research/demonstration program.

Upon return from Congressional recess the first week in May, the House-Senate conferees will meet to negotiate their differences in their respective rescissions. It is anticipated that while the budget cutters did not completely zero out library programs, they will be far more diligent as the FY1996 budget evolves. Library and education supporters will have to watch closely and be ready to advocate strongly as the 104th Congress proceeds in its new agenda. ■

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*(Roundtable cont. from page 326)*

Institutional teams met for over 21 hours to exchange information with representatives from industry, discuss the impact of information technology on teaching and learning, develop more effective strategies for supporting faculty efforts to integrate information resources and technologies into teaching and learning, and meet with peer institutions to share ideas and develop partnerships.

Representatives from all types of organizations and industries shared their thoughts and visions for enhancing teaching and learning through technology. ACRL was represented by its executive director, Althea Jenkins, who spoke on the role of ACRL, ALA, and libraries in this arena. We also heard from representatives from IBM, Follett Corporation, the National Association of College Stores, the Professional and Organizational Development Network, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., and many others. A keynote luncheon address was given by Reed Hundt, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, who encouraged the group to let technology become "cutting edge versus cutting wedge." He stressed that as educators our planning needs to be inclusive, and as citizens

we need to lobby and voice our needs and concerns for improving our infrastructures.

The meeting was coordinated by project director Steven W. Gilbert. In the March/April 1995 issue of *Change* magazine, Gilbert's article, "Teaching Learning and Technology: The Need for Campuswide Planning and Faculty Support Services," speaks to the imperative for forming and implementing local roundtables.

AAHE will sponsor a summer institute in July 1995 to provide intensive training and networking opportunities for institutions wishing to participate in a TLT Roundtable. There is also a listserv that provides a forum for roundtable teams and others to discuss how changing patterns of teaching and learning might be influenced by new applications of information technology and vice versa.

To join the AAHESGIT listserv, send an e-mail message to: LISTPROC@LIST.CREN.NET that says: SUBSCRIBE AAHESGIT YOUR FIRSTNAME YOURLASTNAME. To find out more about the summer institute contact Ellen Shorthill, Project Assistant, AAHE Technology Projects: SHORTHILL@CLARK.NET. ■