

ALA advocates for library support in federal COVID-19 relief spending

ALA is working around the clock to make sure Congress knows how to support libraries as the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic come to light. We are also making sure they know libraries are poised to lead communities in their recovery in the coming months and that libraries are ideal locations for the distribution of community relief resources, materials, and information.

Amid congressional deliberations on supplemental funding for COVID-19 economic relief, ALA sent a letter to every member of Congress urging them to provide funding to support libraries, delivered through the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The proposal included a request for funds to be used for a variety of purposes, from access to digital content and assistive technology to the costs of cleaning facilities. Based on the content of the letter, ALA created a template letter for libraries and library associations advocating for emergency funding.

ALA also joined dozens of national coalition partners to urge quick action by Congress to support libraries, communities, and the services libraries provide, including

- National Council of Nonprofits coalition letter urging a funding stimulus to help the nonprofit sector serve the American people. The funding would benefit library nonprofits such as ALA, state library associations, friends, foundations, and other library organizations, as they continue to serve communities with fewer resources during the national crisis.

- Schools, Health, and Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition letter urging the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

to expedite broadband solutions for unconnected Americans. With regard to libraries, the letter asked the FCC to authorize emergency funding for hot-spot lending programs and all libraries to extend their networks to the home, without losing federal E-rate money.

- A public statement written by ALA and copyright librarians acknowledging the strength of Fair Use for Emergency Remote Teaching and Research. The scores of signatories note, “While fair use is absolutely appropriate to support the heightened demands presented by this emergency, if time periods extend further, campuses will need to investigate and adopt solutions tailored for the long-term.”

In this rapidly changing situation, it is impossible to predict what form federal support for libraries will take. One thing is certain: ALA is on Capitol Hill to advocate for the interests of all types of libraries and the communities they serve.

ALA launches FY 2021 #FundLibraries Campaign

In February, ALA launched a grassroots campaign to urge ALA members to contact their representatives and senators to ask them to sign the annual “Dear Appropriator” letters supporting Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) program. ALA members en masse carried the message to Congress that elimination of LSTA and IAL would have devastating effects on communities. The campaign has already proven to be successful in the House, with greater support than the previous year. Signatures on the bipartisan Grijalva-Young LSTA letter for FY 2021 increased from 150 to 163, while the bipartisan Johnson-Young-McGovern IAL letter increased from 128 to 134 signatures. The Senate letter campaign is still open at the time of writing. *TK*

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