

## ALA wraps up one #FundLibraries campaign, begins another

Despite the challenges of conducting library advocacy efforts during a global pandemic, this year's #FundLibraries campaign to gather support for the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) met with success. In February, shortly after the release of the White House budget proposal, ALA hosted hundreds of meetings on Capitol Hill. In March, ALA's congressional champions released the "Dear Appropriator" letters, kicking off prime time for advocates to tell members of Congress about the importance of library programs funded via the federal budget.

The Dear Appropriator campaign ended March 27 with more supporters than ever, thanks to the thousands of calls, emails, and visits by ALA advocates across the country. In the House, support for LSTA increased significantly from 150 for FY2020 to 164 for FY2021. Support for LSTA remained steady at 45 signatures in the Senate, where getting signatures is, historically, more challenging.


In the final days of the FY2021 appropriations campaign, ALA pivoted to launch a second, simultaneous funding campaign pushing for libraries' inclusion in the largest economic stimulus package in history. As a result, the \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act includes \$50 million for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for digital inclusion projects and more than \$30 billion in relief for schools and colleges. This funding is a vital first step in helping people in rural and urban communities stay connected during this crisis.

The CARES Act included several points of particular interest to college and research libraries, including critical flexibility of certain

student aid and provisions under the Higher Education Act. The CARES Act allows borrowers to defer student loan payments on federal loans (principal and interest) and suspends involuntary loan collections for six months. Importantly, months for which payments are suspended will not adversely affect Public Service Loan Forgiveness requirements of uninterrupted payments. For up to one academic year, Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) are permitted to continue to make Federal Work-Study payments to participating individuals who are unable to fulfill their Work-Study obligation due to the COVID-19 emergency. IHE can transfer unexpended funds from Federal Work-Study to Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants to provide emergency financial aid to students with unexpected expenses due to COVID-19 emergency.

In the longer term, libraries themselves need support to avoid widespread layoffs and cuts in services. ALA is advocating for the next stimulus package (Phase 4), which lawmakers are constructing (at this writing), to include an additional \$2 billion for IMLS to flexibly support libraries facing major revenue losses, emergency needs such as increased cleaning costs, and library programs to support economic recovery in local communities.

## Changes to 2020 Census operations

On March 20, the Census Bureau announced it was adapting or delaying some operations to protect the health and safety of staff members and the public, including extending the self-response period through August 14 (from July 31). The Census Bureau is working with group quarters administrators to ensure residents on college campuses are counted and will adjust operations in response to campus closures. ALA will continue to coordinate with Census Bureau partnership staff and share changes through our census newsletter. Sign up at [ala.org/census](http://ala.org/census). 

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