

In mid-April, Congress finally solidified the FY 2011 budget that will fund the government through September 30. Those who followed the Congressional soap opera know that this budget plan was the product of months of debate, which culminated in a budget that made \$38.5 billion in cuts compared to the FY 2010 levels, and included a 0.2 percent across-the-board cut for all nondefense discretionary spending.

Unfortunately, many programs of importance to libraries received funding cuts. However, one key program—the Census Bureau’s Statistical Compendia Branch—survived the knife in 2011 but remains on the cutting board for 2012.

The Statistical Compendia Branch compiles and releases reports such as the *Statistical Abstract* and the *County and City Data Book* that includes important and usable data routinely accessed by the American public. Closing this branch would mean the end of these reports and easy access to this valuable data.

Providing usable, informative government information to the American public is required for a healthy democracy. Since 1878, the U.S. Census has been compiling these data and making them available to the American people.

ALA has received numerous stories detailing how such reports as the *Statistical Abstract* have benefited the public and how deeply concerned they are at the potential loss of these resources. This information is used to teach college students about government information and statistics, help small businesses locate statistics about their county and environs, and provide university faculty with a go-to place for government data. Though some of this data is available in other locations, this compilation is created in such a way as to be usable to a wide variety of consumers.

It is also true that not all of the data included is published in other locations. If this avenue of openness is closed, the American

public will lose the ability to access this data in a usable format and in some cases, access would be denied completely.

ALA has long fought for effective public access to government information. The association believes that the loss of these important resources, in a time of striving for greater government transparency, is a step backward. It is a mistake to end usable access to this information without a plan in place to ensure that the public has another way to locate it.

Congress recently returned from the August recess and picked up the FY2012 budget process.

As ALA continues to lobby Congress to preserve funding for the Statistical Compendia Branch, members need to hear from residents in their states and districts who uses this tool.

We encourage all ACRL members to call their representatives offices. As always, you can connect with your representative through the ALA Legislative Action Center at capwiz.com/ala.

Those with questions about this issue can contact Jessica McGilvray, assistant director for the ALA Office of Government Relations in the ALA Washington Office, at (800) 941-8478. *zt*

(“The knowledge commons,” cont. from page 469)

2. National Center for Education Statistics predicts a decreased rate of growth in high school graduates in the second decade of the new millennium. nces.ed.gov/programs/projections/projections2018/sec3b.asp.

3. Larry MacPhee, “Learning Spaces: A Tutorial,” *EDUCAUSE Quarterly* 32 (November 1, 2009), www.educause.edu/EDUCAUSE+Quarterly/EDUCAUSEQuarterlyMagazineVolume/LearningSpacesATutorial/163854

4. Existence value is most commonly used in environmental economics. An excellent treatment is www.eoearth.org/article/Total_economic_value. *zt*

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