

FASTR rockets out of Senate Committee

Before dashing to their home states for the August recess, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs approved by unanimous voice vote the Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act of 2015 (FASTR). The bill will now go to the full Senate for consideration as early as September 8. ALA members and supporters worked tirelessly for many years to get to this point, working with Committee Chair Ron Johnson (R-Wisconsin) and his staff and the leadership of Senator John Cornyn (R-Texas) and his staff's tireless efforts toward ensuring that taxpayer-funded research be and remain accessible to the public.

While this may seem a small step, it is a critical, momentum-generating advance and the most meaningful legislative movement on FASTR that has ever occurred. As critical public access points, libraries provide every sector of their communities with a wealth of research information.

Historically, ALA's Washington Office has been closely monitoring open access since at least the 109th Congress, when the Federal Research Public Access Act (FRPAA) of 2006 (S. 2695) was introduced by Senators Cornyn, Jeff Sessions (R-Alabama), and Joe Lieberman (D-Connecticut).

Each Congress the bill would be reintroduced until February 2, 2013, when FASTR became the new FRPAA. ALA has worked closely with SPARC in both letters and lobbying efforts. Each year has seen some movement, and this latest unanimous vote out of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs has been the most exciting and gets us the closest we've ever been to passage.

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FASTR would require federal departments and agencies with an annual extramural research budget of \$100 million to develop a policy to ensure that researchers submit an electronic copy of the final manuscript accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Additionally, the bill would also require that each taxpayer-funded manuscript be made available to the public online and without cost, no later than 12 months after the article has been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

"The public has a right to access government-funded information," said ALA President Sari Feldman. "This legislation provides the public—which includes students in libraries and schools across the nation—with opportunities to learn and grow from scholarly research.

"We would like to thank U.S. Senate Committee Chairman Ron Johnson for his leadership in moving FASTR forward. We would also like to thank Senator John Cornyn for introducing the Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act of 2015. Earlier this year, ALA awarded Senator Cornyn the 2015 James Madison Award for his work to promote the public's right to know and improve public access to government information." ❧

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