

Federal dollars on the line for state library programs

It's the start of "appropriations" season again in Washington, that time every year when the President submits a budget to Congress, and then Congress drafts, debates endlessly, and eventually votes on bills to provide federal funding for everything from tackling the Zika virus to supporting libraries. Libraries in every state in the nation benefit from funds allocated by Congress for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), the only federally funded program specifically dedicated to supporting libraries. Last year, libraries received just under \$183 million in LSTA funding, about \$156 million of which flowed to states as matching grants.

Around the time you are reading this, individual Members of Congress will start signing letters addressed to their influential colleagues who sit on the powerful Appropriations Committees in both chambers of Congress. Those letters will ask the committee to provide specific dollar amounts for specific programs, including LSTA. The math is easy: the more Members of Congress who sign a "Dear Appropriator" letter asking for significant LSTA funding, the better the odds of that money actually being awarded by the Appropriations Committee and eventually flowing to your state.

Members of Congress are more likely to sign a letter urging level funding for LSTA if they hear from constituents back home. We urge you to reach out to your Members of Congress, request a meeting when they're in the home district where you can speak with them and ask them to add their name to the LSTA "Dear Appropriator" letters that are now circulating. For more information, contact Kevin Maher in ALA's Washington Office at kmaher@alawash.org or by phone at (202) 463-8236.

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ACLU spearheading privacy reform campaign

ALA and our privacy-minded coalition partners from across the political spectrum have been lobbying hard for years to change the outdated 1986 Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA). Under its terms, once your electronic records are more than six months old, the authorities don't actually have to get a judge-issued search warrant to compel your phone company or Internet service provider, for example, to hand them over. ALA is actively backing bills, such as the Email Privacy Act (H.R. 699) in the current Congress, which would grant full Fourth Amendment protection to all online communications as soon as they're created. However, H.R. 699 has faced some roadblocks, and there's reason to believe that opponents will try hard to weaken it.

Faced with Washington's increasing congressional gridlock, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has chosen to take control of the issue at the state level by spearheading a new nationwide privacy campaign, #TakeCTRL. To advance state legislation, ACLU has coordinated the introduction of ECPA and other privacy reform bills in 16 states and the District of Columbia with the goal of upgrading personal, student, and employee data privacy protections across the country. They already had success in California, which signed CalECPA into law late last year. ACLU is seeking to replicate that success in other states by passing state ECPS bills in Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, and Virginia, and by passing several other kinds of pro-privacy legislation proposed in other states. ALA continues to support #TakeCTRL.

In the meantime, ALA still hopes to see federal ECPA reform passed. Please be sure to subscribe to District Dispatch for the latest on ALA's privacy advocacy efforts in Congress and how you can further them, as well. For more information, contact Adam Eisgrau at aeisgrau@alawash.org or by phone at (202) 628-8410. *z*