

Pending legislation in the 105th Congress

The 105th Congress is scheduled to end the second and final session of this Congress or "sine die" on October 9. As we go to press, there remain many contentious issues on congressional agendas, most notably several appropriations bills, which, without passing, could again shut down the federal government. The scenario of another government shutdown is not relished by anyone, especially incumbents seeking to be returned to the House or Senate in the November elections.

Negotiations and debate on bills related to intellectual property, government information, and other library-related issues could go right up until the very last moment of the 105th Congress. With the overlay of other political intrigues and investigations and the tremendous amount of appropriations legislation to be completed, it is hard to predict which bills will find closure in this Congress.

Watch especially for final reports on whether the House and Senate complete work on outstanding intellectual property legislation. In early August, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2281 implementing the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) copyright treaty bill with a controversial database protection measure attached. Negotiations between House and Senate conferees could go right up to the first week in October.

Similarly watch for final results on S. 2288, the Wendell H. Ford Government Publications Reform Act of 1998. It would revise Title 44 of the United States Code to improve public access to government information, including strengthening the Federal Depository Library Program. Meanwhile, some observers predict that final reports from this Congress will include reauthorization of Higher Education Act before "sine die."

Internet filtering provisions have been attached to two different appropriations bills. Attached to the Commerce, Justice, State and Judicial appropriations bill S. 2260, is a bill spon-

sored by Sen. John McCain (R-Arizona), S. 1619, which would require all E-rate telecommunications discount-eligible schools and libraries to install filtering software on some or all of their computer terminals in order to get the library-school discounts. S. 1482, a bill authored by Sen. Dan Coats (R-Indiana), which would prohibit commercial Web distribution to minors, has also been attached as an amendment to S. 2260. No such amendments are attached to the House version of the commerce appropriations bill, although there is a separate stand alone bill, H.R. 3783, sponsored by Rep. Michael Oxley (R-Ohio) and others in the House essentially identical to Coats' Child Online Protection Act.

However, the House appropriations subcommittee with jurisdiction over library and education funding approved 15 to 0 an amendment offered by Rep. Ernest Istook Jr. (R-Oklahoma) that would require K-12 public schools and libraries, as a condition of receiving federal funds from any federal agency for the acquisition or operation of computers, to install software to protect children from obscenity.

Whatever the final outcome of pending legislation in this Congress, this fall campaign period is an extremely important opportunity for ACRL members and other library advocates to make contact with Congressional incumbents and new candidates alike. With key issues in mind, such as intellectual property and access to government information, library advocates are encouraged to attend and participate in candidates' forums and debates.

ALA creates Legislative Action Center

To build upon the legislative updates in the ALA Washington Office Newslines (ALAWON) and information provided at the ACRL Web site, the ALA Washington Office has recently expanded its online services to include the Legislative Action Center located at <http://congress.nw.dc.us/ala/>. From this site you can read alerts on legislative issues that are critical for libraries, stay informed of Congress' current schedule, and find your members of Congress. ■

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