

FY2017 LIBRARY FUNDING SUPPORT LETTERS: TEXT CIRCULATING TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS NOW

SENATE LSTA LETTER

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We write to urge your support for the education, workforce, and economic development needs of Americans by providing \$186.6 million for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) in the fiscal year 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Libraries serve a vital role in our communities. Even as the economy shows signs of improvement, patrons continue to turn to their local library for free access to essential information on a wide range of topics, skills training, and computing services.

Every day, libraries across the country provide no-fee public access to computers and the Internet in some of our most distressed communities. According to a recent American Library Association (ALA) report, 65 percent of all libraries nationwide say they are the only provider of free Internet access in their communities. In rural areas, 73 percent of libraries report they serve as their community's only free Internet provider. This access is critical at a time when applications for many jobs and government services must be filled out online.

Libraries, however, provide more than just Internet access. According to another ALA report, more than 92 percent of public libraries offer services that help patrons conduct job searches, create resumes, access training for technology and technical skills, and innovate through the use of 3-D printers and makerspaces. Libraries also provide resources and specialized collections for small businesses to help in the creation of business plans and the development of new growth strategies.

Moreover, libraries expose children to books and information to help them gain and enhance their literacy skills. Numerous surveys show that many of our nation's children living in poverty have very limited access to books at home. These children depend on their local libraries' story-time and summer reading programs to help them prepare to learn in school and succeed.

Unfortunately, during this time of increased demand, many libraries are facing cuts and severe budget pressures, leading to closures and reduced hours. LSTA is the only federal program that helps

public libraries meet community needs, provide enhanced services through technology, reach underserved populations, and retain librarians while recruiting new entrants to this important field. Consisting of a state formula program, which is amplified by a state match, and competitive grants, LSTA is more essential now than ever.

We greatly appreciate the increase for LSTA included in the fiscal year 2016 Omnibus. We urge you to provide \$186.6 million this year, and no less than current funding for the grants to states program. With this funding level, we can help ensure that Americans of all ages have access to libraries, Internet, and information services; the resources they need to develop literacy skills and achieve academically; and the services and tools to search for, find, and create jobs.

Thank you for your continued support in sustaining and strengthening our nation's libraries.

Sincerely,

HOUSE LSTA LETTER

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
House Committee on Appropriations
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Sincerely,

Raúl M. Grijalva

Member of Congress

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Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
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Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As your Subcommittee considers the Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations bill for the Department of Education, we urge you to maintain the investment in the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) grant program, which was authorized in the Every Student Succeeds Act. IAL provides competitive awards to school libraries and national not-for-profit organizations, including partnerships that reach families outside of local educational agencies, for providing books and childhood literacy activities to children and families in high need communities. The program also supports parental engagement and focuses on promoting student literacy from birth through high school.

Since its inception in Fiscal Year 2012, 78 IAL grants have been awarded to nonprofit organizations and school districts across the nation. Some examples of IAL grant activities include:

- Maryetta School District, located in a very rural, economically depressed area of Northeastern Oklahoma, is using its IAL grant to improve literacy achievement for 624 students (grades K-8th) through the intense Reading Every-day for Academic Development (iREAD) Project. Project objectives and activities support innovative programs that promote early literacy for young children, motivate older children to read, and increase student achievement by using school libraries, distributing free books to children and their families, and offering high-quality literacy activities and innovative technology tools.
- Save the Children and Reach Out and Read received a two-year grant in FY2014 to build community capacity to support children's education and well-being in some of the United States' most impoverished and isolated regions. Through this project, the two organizations are partnering to serve nearly 20,000 children in 30 rural communities in Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, and South Carolina, building home libraries, improving community collaboration, and empowering families.

- Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) used IAL funds to launch a two-year research study examining stemming summer learning loss among children living in poverty. Of the 41 participating school districts across 16 states with a participating population of 33,000 second- through fourth-grade students, the most underserved districts showed the most gains, including rural populations.

Ensuring children's access to books is a critical component of our nation's effort to promote life-long learning and remains a key aspect of early childhood literacy. For American families living in poverty, access to reading materials is severely limited. Children living in poverty have fewer books in their homes than their peers, and this unfortunate reality hinders their ability to prepare for school and stay on track. We also recognize the importance of effective school library programs in promoting literacy and advancing student achievement.

Congress has taken an important step in supporting the needs of disadvantaged students by providing IAL funding for book distribution, early literacy services, and effective school library programs. The Administration's budget request also includes funding for IAL. We ask that you maintain this investment in the Fiscal Year 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Moira Lenehan-Razzuri
Office of U.S. Senator Jack Reed
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-4642

HOUSE IAL LETTER

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, & Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States Congress
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, & Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States Congress
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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