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Rapidly Vote to Confirm Dr. Carla Hayden as Librarian of Congress

ALA Position: The American Library Association is pleased and proud to urge every Senator to quickly approve Dr. Hayden as the 14th Librarian of Congress . . .

What makes Dr. Hayden qualified to lead the Library of Congress?

- She transformed Baltimore's Enoch Pratt Free Library into a national model of what a 21st century library is and can be: a community hub, business incubator, job center, literacy educator, trusted source of access to the internet and information of all kinds, and more;
- She has specific and long expertise in modernizing library facilities, services, collections and distribution models as evidenced by her present leadership of a \$114 million overhaul of Baltimore's central library and \$40 million investment in modernizing its branch libraries;
- Her skills, particularly in managing technological change, have been recognized and endorsed by many, including: *Fortune* magazine, which just named her one of the "World's 50 Greatest Leaders;" and the President and CEO of the Internet Association (an alliance of many of the nation's most well-known technology companies), who said that "*her past work updating library systems for the digital age are exactly the skills needed to modernize the digital infrastructure at the Library of Congress;*" and, by no means incidentally. . .
- She is a librarian: an expert, by rigorous training and long experience, in making information available to all people in the most timely, useful and creative ways possible.

Haven't all past Librarians of Congress been scholars?

- No. Upon Dr. Hayden's confirmation, **fully half** of the Librarians of Congress since 1954 (two of four) will have been credentialed, practicing professional librarians. Also, the nation's longest-serving Librarian of Congress was eminent library administrator Herbert Putnam. Major revision of the Copyright Act was achieved during his 40-year tenure.
- More specifically, while the immediate past Librarian (Billington) was an academic before assuming the post in 1987, he took over from a professor who also had practiced law before becoming Librarian in 1975, even attaining a British barrister's credentials (Boorstin). He was preceded in 1954 by a fully credentialed professional librarian (Mumford).
- Prior to 1954, the previous ten Librarians of Congress have been: a Clerk of the House of Representatives, Congressman, lawyer/novelist, printer, physician, newspaper editor, journalist, library administrator, poet/postmaster/lawyer/journalist, and college professor.

A perfect nominee for Library of Congress

President Barack Obama could not have chosen more wisely when he nominated longtime Enoch Pratt Free Public Library CEO Carla Hayden to head the Library of Congress this week. Ms. Hayden, who has directed Baltimore's sprawling public library system since 1993, is **ideally suited by experience, vision and temperament** to lead the venerable 214-year-old institution in Washington that has been called America's library. She is an innovator who can be counted on to bring the Library of Congress' vast collection of 162 million books, manuscripts, maps and documents into the digital age for the benefit of people across the country and around the world, and we urge the Senate to confirm her nomination without delay.

In announcing his decision, Mr. Obama noted that "Dr. Hayden has **devoted her career to modernizing libraries** so that everyone can participate in today's digital culture. She has the proven experience, dedication, and deep knowledge of our nation's libraries to serve our country well."

Ms. Hayden graduated from Roosevelt University and earned master's and doctoral degrees in library science from the University of Chicago. For a time she **taught library science at the University of Pittsburgh** before beginning her professional career as a **children's librarian at the Chicago Public Library**, where she became deputy director in 1991. After coming to Baltimore to lead the Pratt, she was **named National Librarian of the Year by Library Journal in 1995** and was **twice honored for her outreach efforts** to disadvantaged and minority communities.

Though Ms. Hayden is often described as a model of calm composure, she's not afraid to get feisty in defense of her beliefs. She was **president of the American Library Association in 2003** when she feuded with then-U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft over a section of the Patriot Act that allowed the FBI to spy on library users' records. When Ms. Hayden criticized the law as an invasion of readers' privacy, Mr. Ashcroft ridiculed her complaint, claiming the ALA had been "misled." Ms. Hayden promptly shot back that the FBI's snooping was comparable to the government surveillance of librarians during the McCarthy era.

If confirmed by the Senate, Ms. Hayden would take on the formidable task of modernizing a Library of Congress that remains sadly behind the times in terms of technology and to extend the reach of its services to new readers. Its collections have not been digitized for the most part, and critics say it hasn't kept pace with basic improvements such as high-speed Internet service and Wi-Fi connections. In Baltimore, Ms. Hayden **increased patrons' access to computers and e-readers and expanded the library's electronic collection**. She's also **leading a \$114 million renovation of the central library** that began last year and another \$40 million in renovations to neighborhood branches.

Perhaps most importantly, Ms. Hayden throughout her career has **recognized the vital role that libraries play in maintaining and strengthening the communities they serve**. That **commitment to community service was vividly on display last year** when she kept the library's doors open during the unrest following the death of Freddie Gray while in police custody as a haven where residents could gather. "It was very evident that people needed, not only information, but a safe place and a trusted place to go," she recalled. "We became a site for people to actually get food, to get supplies. We opened up our meeting room. It became that community meeting place. People were so relieved to have a safe place to be."

Ms. Hayden would become the first woman and the first African-American to lead the Library of Congress, and we have no doubt that she's up to the job. She's **a builder as well as a scholar and superb administrator**.

We can think of no one better qualified to lead America's national library into the 21st century.