

All Members
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Request for Endorsement of “Dear Appropriator” Letters for FY18 Library Funding

Dear Senator:

The undersigned companies collectively do business in every state in the nation, together generating several billion dollars in total annual revenue. We directly employ thousands of people and financially enable scores of other businesses in our supply and service chains to hire thousands more. Many, though not all, of us serve a very special set of customers at the core of nearly every community in the country who themselves annually spend more than \$8 billion on goods and services provided by thousands of businesses.

Those unique customers we support are the nation’s libraries and, as the FY 2018 appropriations cycle begins, we write to ask you to join us **by signing Dear Appropriator letters urging full funding for the [Library Services and Technology Act \(LSTA\)](#) at \$186.6 million and [Innovative Approaches to Literacy \(IAL\)](#) at \$27 million.** LSTA funding goes almost entirely to a population-based matching grant program that puts states in charge of how funds are spent. IAL allows school libraries to buy books and educational materials for the nation’s neediest children. 1) **Libraries build strong workforces and strong economies** in communities of every size in every state in the nation. For example, an FY 2017 study in Texas just documented an “ROI” of \$4.64 for every dollar the state invested in public libraries, and that result is not anomalous;*

2) **State libraries dramatically leverage taxpayer dollars** by using LSTA funds to purchase or contract for electronic materials that they make available to every individual library in their states, thus realizing enormous efficiencies and economies of scale. Consequently, every library user enjoys access to authoritative information that would cost many fold more or simply be unavailable due to cost factors if otherwise had to be purchased by individual libraries, schools and universities; and

3) **Public universities garner billions in private industry grants for R & D research to which such LSTA-funded electronic online resources are vital.** Those grants, in turn, offset taxpayer-funded education costs and contribute substantially to keeping American companies competitive.

By these measures, **library funding may be among the very best yielding and most leverageable investment that Congress makes across the entire federal budget. Libraries are thus very much critical national infrastructure: ubiquitous, indispensable, and economically essential.** Consider:

- There are 25% more public libraries in the United States than Starbucks;†
- Each year, America’s more than 120,000 libraries of all kinds are visited 1.4 billion times nationwide (averaging to about 4 million visits per day or 2,663 visits per minute);
- Those many millions of visitors come to modern libraries to borrow books, but also because libraries do (and have for decades been doing) so much more:
 - 100% of libraries offer free access to the internet;
 - 97% help patrons, including particularly veterans, complete government forms online;
 - 90% train children and adults in computer literacy and other online skills;
 - 73% aid patrons with job applications and interviewing skills;

* In 2010, Ohio realized a return of \$3.89, and a 2009 survey of similar studies conducted in 10 states during the preceding 10 years showed an average ROI of \$4.54 for every library dollar spent in several different environments (within 10 cents of the figure derived this year in Texas, above).

† There were 13,172 Starbucks in the U.S. in FY 2016 and 16,559 public library outlets in FY 2014, the last year for which such information was available.

- 68% help users use databases to find job openings; and
- 48% provide entrepreneurs and small business owners with online resources.

The bottom line, literally and figuratively, is that the health of our businesses, our workers and all of our communities is inextricably linked to the health of libraries and their continued federal funding. Accordingly, we urge you to:

- **sign both of the attached bipartisan letters to your colleagues on the Appropriations Committee** (circulated for LSTA by Sens. Reed and Collins and for IAL by Sens. Reed, Grassley and Stabenow) asking them to fully fund for FY 2018 the Library Services and Technology Act at \$186.6 million and the tiny but vital Innovative Approaches to Literacy program at \$27 million; and
- **ensure sufficient funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services**, which has efficiently administered the LSTA to bipartisan praise for many years.

Indications of intent to sign these letters have been requested by their authors by May 19th. To support LSTA and IAL by signing them, or should you have any questions, please contact Elyse Wasch concerning LSTA at elyse_wasch@reed.senate.gov and Moira Lenehan regarding IAL at moira_lenehan@reed.senate.gov. Thank you for supporting America's businesses by supporting America's libraries.

Respectfully submitted,

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