

Year-round advocacy

Every month, staff in ALA's Washington office have a chance to share news from the Capitol in this column for *C&RL News*. Rarely is the Washington Hotline news "hot" by the time it reaches your inbox or mailbox. You'll find the hottest news by following our blog, District-Dispatch.org, and signing up for ALA's action center.

Hot or not, it's important to us to keep ALA members informed. As with writing research papers, cramming is not a successful advocacy strategy in the long term. The most impactful advocacy comes from year-round engagement with issues that impact libraries, library workers, and the people we serve—and with the elected leaders who make decisions.

Over the past year that I've been at ALA, library advocates have seen many years of labor come to fruition. With respect to government information, libraries have scored some major wins. For the first time, Congressional Research Service reports will be made available free and online to the public, starting this fall. Thanks to significant input from the library community, we are well on our way toward modernizing the Federal Depository Library Program. Both of these gains are the result of nearly 20 years' worth of advocacy.

Another outstanding example is the Maraksh Treaty Implementation Act, which received unanimous approval of the Senate Judiciary and Foreign Affairs Committees and now awaits a full Senate vote. The treaty will

permit the import and export of accessible materials for people who are print disabled. Libraries negotiated with other stakeholders for years before coming to a consensus, but our commitment paid off in strong bipartisan support, and millions of people around the world will benefit.

I've seen that when library advocates speak, elected leaders and their staff listen. They know that your voices represent the interests of entire communities. You have a platform at your library and through your institution's communications that can help shape the opinions of thousands of voters, who see you as a uniquely credible source of information.

Members of Congress and their staff place a high value on groups and citizens who have built relationships with them, and you are in the perfect position to establish and cultivate those relationships. We in the Washington Office urge you, just as this year's National Library Legislative Day participants did, to invite your members of Congress or their staff members to visit your library. Show them the difference your library makes in the lives of your users, their constituents. Share and demonstrate the knowledge and experience you have that can contribute to better public policy.

ALA's public policy office in Washington, D.C., is here to serve as a resource to you. We will continue to provide you information about advocating for specific issues at times when your advocacy will have the most impact. We are also working to provide a comprehensive strategy for year-round advocacy and to support you in taking the first steps toward building relationships with your decision-makers. *ZZ*

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