

Premidterm election priorities in Washington

With just weeks to go before midterm elections, Congress is both making and delaying decisions on issues that are important to libraries.

On September 13, the U.S. House and Senate Appropriations Committees released a conference committee report on fiscal year 2019 funding for programs under the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee, which controls spending levels for many federal library programs.

The news is good.

The conference committee recommended increasing funding levels for many library programs, including a \$2 million increase for the Institute of Museum and Library Services and a \$13 million increase for the National Library of Medicine. The committee also approved a \$70 million increase for career and technical education state grants and a \$25 million increase for adult education state grants, all of which provide additional funding opportunities for libraries.

It's not a done deal, but the positive news from the conference committee is a good sign that library advocates once again have demonstrated the value of libraries in every community and congressional district. We hope the next appropriations alert will be a call to say thank you to senators and representatives for their support of federal funding for libraries.

The Marrakesh Treaty Implementation Act, passed by the full Senate in June, is in a holding pattern. If the bill is passed and signed by the president, it will increase access to

content for English speakers with print disabilities, especially in developing countries, where less than 1% of all published print material is accessible. It will also allow U.S. residents to obtain foreign-language content.

The legislation now awaits action in the full House, which must vote on the bill because it impacts domestic copyright law. As House staff have indicated that the bill will not be considered for a vote until after the midterms, ALA is launching a grassroots advocacy campaign to bring the Marrakesh Treaty Implementation Act to a floor vote before the midterms. To help this bill cross the finish line, visit the legislative action center on ALA's advocacy website at ala.org/advocacy.

Meanwhile, we at ALA have our own premidterm election agenda: providing resources that library professionals need to inform patrons. The League of Women Voters hosted a webinar for ALA members and wrote a blog post for *American Libraries* to share nonpartisan ways that libraries can get involved and prepare patrons for election season. Both are available at americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/.

ALA is also collaborating with the Campus Vote Project (CVP), which works with college administrators, faculty, and staff to establish plans to educate students not only on voter registration, but also on the options and requirements for casting a ballot.

"Young people ages 18–24 are an increasingly large block of eligible voters in the country, but they vote at rates that are half of those of older generations," writes CVP's Kristen Muthig for *ACRL Insider*.

"The potential for young people to participate in the midterms and make a difference in their communities is there. . . . Libraries and their staff can be a contributing influence and help students participate in November." **ZZ**

Shawnda Hines is assistant director of communications, email: shines@ala.org, in ALA's Washington Office