

As the 115th Congress draws to a close, last chance to advocate for libraries

After the federal elections on November 6 (remember to vote!), the 115th Congress will be in its final weeks before the new Congress takes office in January. This “lame-duck” session is the last chance for Congress to act on bills before they expire, making it a critical time for library advocates to contact their members of Congress about our active priorities.

Yet again, the past several weeks have evidenced how effective and impactful library supporters can be when they carry our message to the Capitol.

Library funding: On September 28, President Trump signed into law an appropriations package that included successful outcomes for library funding programs in the next fiscal year. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) will gain \$2 million to improve administration and research. Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grants will receive level funding. An additional \$70 million for Perkins Career and Technical Education grants will provide more low-interest loans for nontraditional learners in schools and libraries.


Readers with print disabilities: On October 9, President Trump signed into law the Marrakesh Treaty Implementation Act. The legislation, passed by the Senate in June, provides a copyright exception to allow libraries and other authorized entities to make reading materials available across international borders to people with print disabilities such as visual impairment. ALA advocated for the treaty for more than a decade.

Copyright in sound recordings: On October 11, President Trump signed into law the Music Modernization Act. The legislation will increase libraries’ ability to provide access to and preserve pre-1972 sound recordings with all of the user and library exceptions.

Your advocacy is essential to bringing these victories across the finish line, and your continued advocacy is still needed on these additional priorities:

IMLS reauthorization: On September 28, legislation to reauthorize IMLS was introduced in the House and Senate. The Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA) would ensure equitable distribution of LSTA funds to large and small states, expand eligibility for tribal libraries, and support disaster readiness. Reauthorizing these vital programs would reinforce ALA’s message that strong communities need strong libraries. The bipartisan bills are S. 3530 in the Senate and H.R. 6988 in the House. ALA hopes they will be voted on during the lame duck session.

Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) modernization: The bipartisan FDLP Modernization Act was introduced on March 15 and approved by the Committee on House Administration on April 12. The bill, introduced as H.R. 5305, would modernize FDLP and related programs that provide public access to government information. The committee has been working to prepare the bill to be considered on the House floor, hopefully before this Congress adjourns.

Please visit ala.org/takeaction today to contact your members of Congress in support of these library priorities. When our library community works together, we can continue to secure policy that will make libraries stronger. 

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