Successful library funding fight shifts to Senate

In March, the President submitted his budget outline to Congress recommending elimination of LSTA and IAL funding for FY2018, as well as significant cuts in research funding. The budget also proposed deep cuts to TRIO, GEAR UP, and other work-study programs, which would impact libraries that rely on student employees. (Many libraries use TRIO and GEAR UP funds to help students get prepared to attend college.) The budget also called for these major cuts in education funding: $3.9 billion in Pell Grants, $732 million in student grant aid, and elimination of Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants for low-income college students.

The threat in the President's "skinny" budget to eliminate the Institute of Museum and Library Services and significant federal library funding galvanized ALA and its grassroots, who deluged their Members of the House of Representatives with requests to sign the annual "Dear Appropriator" letters supporting the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL). The campaign was a rousing success in the House and now carries on to the Senate.

Quick action by the library community produced overwhelming results as one third of the entire House signed one, or both, of the LSTA and IAL letters. The increased support for LSTA and IAL generated sends a strong message to the Appropriations Committee that cuts will not sit well with a significant and bipartisan segment of Representatives. The campaign now carries over to the Senate, where similar LSTA and IAL letters will soon begin circulating for senators' signatures. ALA will again mount an overwhelming grassroots campaign to secure a significant increase in Senate signatures over last year's level of support for these critical programs.

Our actions are making a difference. To continue the progress made so far, however, library professionals and other advocates should be ready to respond to the ALA call to action when the "Dear Appropriator" letters begin to circulate in the Senate. Calls, emails, and letters to both of your senators will be essential motivators for them to sign the letters. Stay informed on developments in the congressional appropriations process by signing up to receive action alerts and District Dispatch, the ALA Washington Office blog. Visit the Fight for Libraries! page on ALA's website to learn other ways you can help protect federal funding for libraries.

LIS faculty to get librarians ready to code

On April 7, ALA announced the LIS faculty selected to participate in Phase II of the Libraries Ready to Code project. The newly selected Ready to Code faculty cohort will develop graduate-level course models that equip MLS students to deliver coding programs through public and school libraries. The seven fellows will collaborate in redesigning select media/technology courses from their respective institutions to embed Ready to Code concepts.

Launched in 2016, Libraries Ready to Code is an initiative of ALA in partnership with Google, Inc. It focuses on the role of school and public libraries in providing opportunities for the nation's youth to develop computational thinking skills through coding activities and other computer science education programs. Stay tuned for more information about the pilot project. It will be evaluated for impact and effectiveness, and findings will be broadly disseminated.

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