

Needed: Academic librarians to fight cuts to library funding

The Government Printing Office (GPO) and the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) are slated for the *largest cuts* in a FY2001 legislative branch appropriations bill, if the budget numbers passed in a May 9 vote by the full House Appropriations Committee prevail. In a strict party line vote the House leadership took aim at GPO, which could receive a 25.3% cut if the House FY2001 appropriations numbers prevail (\$77 million less than FY2000).

This would translate into a 60% cut to the FDLP and would *eliminate* printed and other tangible formats, forcing federal government information at depository libraries to be *only* available electronically. GPO would no longer print the U.S. Code; it would only be available online or by purchase, likely at great expense, through private sources.

Legislative branch appropriations also include the Library of Congress (LC), the Government Accounting Office (GAO), the Capital Hill Police, and other agencies. Proponents of the cuts cite this year's budget resolution (H. Con. Res. 290) to justify these cuts.

At LC, the House appropriators proposed deep cuts for the Copyright Office and the Congressional Research Service, which could both lose significant numbers of staff. The Copyright Office could receive a \$5 million dollar cut from its \$12 million appropriated budget. This could possibly eliminate 130 of the approximately 520 jobs in the Copyright Office. There may also be less funding than needed in the digital future projects at the LC. The impact of these cuts on GPO and LC and their services to the American public have been summarized in recent ALAWONs.

As we go to press, the House legislative branch appropriations bill could go to the House floor sometime during May. (There is no bill number at this writing.) The ALA

online Legislative Action Center (LAC) can provide sample letters and further background on this issue. The LAC can be used to generate e-mail and/or letters to Congress and allows users to customize the sample letters or write their own.

The ALA Office of Government Relations has also written various ALAWONs about this critical situation. For further background information see ALAWON, Volume 9, Nos. 42, 41, 40, and 36.

Academic librarians are asked to write letters, make calls and send e-mail to their senators and representatives. Invite them into depository libraries and other academic libraries that use depository materials during the Memorial Day Congressional Recess and other recess times in the coming weeks. Supporters should also ask depository library users to express their concerns. Researchers, local governments, and the business community as well as professors, students, and the general public are all consumers of federal government information.

Our congressional officials must be engaged and understand these issues if they are to successfully oppose these cuts. They need to see firsthand that, while much government information is currently available electronically, there is still an extremely large percentage of government documents that are not currently or cannot be available online. More than 25,000 titles are only available from federal agencies in tangible formats. Titles like the U.S. Code cannot realistically be used online. We are not yet in a "paperless" society!

The American public's ability to access government information is severely threatened by these cuts. It is the library community that must rally to save this important resource for all citizens. For further information contact: Lynne Bradley or Mary Costabile at the ALA Office of Government Relations at (800) 941-8478 or e-mail them at leb@alawash.org or mrc@alawash.org. See also the GODORT Web site at <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/godort/#godort>. ■

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