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American Library Association

Washington Office Newsline

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Congress Passes Bill for Database Revealing Government Spending

The U.S. House of Representatives passed S. 2590 by voice vote on Wednesday night, clearing the measure for the President's signature. Called the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, S. 2590 directs the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to establish a web site with a searchable database of grants, loans, and contracts awarded by the federal government. The legislation was supported by members of both political parties and a number of conservative and liberal budgetary watchdog and open government groups. The Senate passed the bill on Tuesday, Sept. 7. The same day the House passed S. 2590, the Senate also passed a resolution (S. Con. Res. 114) amending the original bill. The amendment requires the database to provide separate search engines for grants and contracts, instead of the combined search engine originally planned. The House agreed to these changes.

Although S. 2590 mandates the web site be available to the public by January 1, 2008, OMB said "it will immediately start implementing the law once the President signs it," CQ Today reported.

Environmental Protection Agency Plans to Close Libraries by Sept. 30

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plans to close three of its regional libraries by Sept. 30, according to several sources. Anticipating Congress will not reverse President Bush's proposal to cut \$2 million from the EPA library budget (contained in H.R. 5386, the Department of Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2007), the agency is preparing to close its libraries in Chicago, Dallas, and Kansas City by the end of the federal government's fiscal year. Not only will the three libraries, which serve 15 Midwestern and Southern states, be closed, but it is reported that EPA will also begin gradually reducing hours and services at other regional libraries. These changes will result in up to 80,000 documents being boxed up for digitization at some future date and an end to public access to many research materials once made available through EPA libraries.

EPA's budget (H.R. 5386) is currently before the Senate. Inasmuch as Congress is rapidly running out of time to consider individual appropriation bills and the possibility that an omnibus appropriations measure may be taken up instead, it's critically important that you contact your Senators and

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ALA Washington Office
Emily Sheketoff, Executive

ask them to restore the \$2 million in funding for EPA libraries.



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