

American Library Association

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Save EPA Libraries: Ask Senators to sign on to Boxer-Lautenberg letter

Please ask your Senators to sign onto the Boxer- Lautenberg "Dear Colleague" letter asking the Senate Appropriations Committee to direct EPA to maintain access and research expertise at ALL of EPA's regional and headquarter libraries until the Agency solicits adequate public and Congressional input. A draft version of the letter follows – the text of the letter may change slightly.

Background:

The government, the business community and the general public depend on EPA's libraries to conduct research critical to protecting public health, enforcing environmental laws, and promoting sound economic, land-use planning and other decisions. Closure of these facilities will severely limit, and in some cases eliminate, the information resources needed by those investigating issues critical to environmental safety and health.

Although EPA's FY2007 budget hasn't been passed yet, this year EPA has already eliminated or reduced library service covering 31 states (see list below).

ACTION NEEDED

Please call your Senators and ask them to sign on to the Boxer- Lautenberg "Dear Colleague" letter! The letter asks the Appropriators to direct EPA to maintain access and research expertise at all of EPA's regional and headquarter libraries until the Agency solicits adequate public and Congressional input.

The deadline for signing the letter is November 1st – so please call today! Your Senator's Office can arrange to sign-on to the letter by calling Grant Cope (202-224-7931) or Daniel Rosenberg (202-224-7225) and that they must do so before November 1st.

Draft letter to Senate Appropriations Committee (this letter is a draft and text may change slightly)

October 26, 2006

Honorable Thad Cochran, Chair
Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate

Honorable Conrad Burns, Chair
Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Honorable Robert C. Byrd, Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate

Honorable Byron Dorgan, Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee

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Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to request that you direct the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to restore and maintain public access and onsite library collections and services at EPA's headquarters, regional, laboratory, and specialized program libraries while the Agency solicits and considers public input on its plan to drastically cut its library budget and services. Government representatives, businesses and citizens use information in these libraries to protect public health, enforce environmental laws, and promote sound decision-making. We are concerned that EPA is already dismantling its unique library system without including the public or Members of Congress in the decision-making. Congress should not allow EPA to gut its library system, which plays a critical role in supporting the Agency's mission to protect the environment and public health.

EPA has already eliminated or reduced library service to the public in seven EPA regions covering 31 states and is planning to close its Headquarters' library and maintain it only as a repository. (Attachment) EPA has also closed its pesticide and toxics program library, reducing access to unique materials needed to assess pesticides and other chemicals' potential health effects on children. EPA is implementing these devastating closures on the grounds that they expect to save \$2 million.

EPA's libraries provide far more benefits than the minor cost reductions resulting from their closure. A 2004 EPA report found that "[c]alculated conservatively, the benefit-to-cost ratio for EPA library services ranges between 2:1 and 5.7:1." The report noted that libraries saved EPA professional staff \$7.5 million and non-EPA personnel \$2.8 million, in 2003; and that one-third of the libraries' work gave EPA \$22 million in benefits.

The American Library Association, American Association of Law Libraries, and Special Library Association strongly oppose the cuts, pointing out that EPA has "unique collections, including an estimated 50,000 one-of-a-kind primary source documents that are available nowhere else." Notes provided by the American Library Association that recount a meeting with EPA on the library closures state that their warnings that the Agency should develop a new system before closing libraries "fell on deaf ears." Unions representing 10,000 EPA scientists, engineers, and other staff have similar concerns. They note that "[t]he ability of EPA to respond to emergencies will be reduced because important reference materials may be unavailable or take significant time to receive from storage or another library."

A document from EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA) about the library restructuring expresses concern about the Agency's failure to adequately assess costs and funding needs, maintain critical information, and ensure data accessibility. OECA notes that the libraries have information important to specific regions, states and locales, and unique data on industrial processes and analytical methods. OECA has indicated that it fears that dispersal of this material without proper tracking and access could undercut rulemakings and the ability to "substantiate and support findings, determinations, and guidance."

We are extremely troubled that EPA is rushing to eliminate or reduce library operations without adequately consulting Congress or the public. We respectfully request that you direct EPA in the FY 2007 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill to restore and maintain public access and onsite library collections and services at EPA's headquarters, regional, laboratory, and specialized program libraries to the status they held as of January 1, 2006. We also ask that you direct EPA to solicit and consider public and Congressional input, in an open process, prior to making any decision to close a library, cut services, or dramatically restructure the Agency's library system.

Sincerely,

Barbara Boxer

Frank R. Lautenberg

United States Senator

United States Senator

CC: Senator Ted Stevens
Senator Arlen Specter
Senator Pete Domenici
Senator Christopher Bond
Senator Mitch McConnell
Senator Richard Shelby
Senator Judd Gregg
Senator Robert Bennett
Senator Larry Craig
Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson
Senator Mike DeWine
Senator Sam Brownback
Senator Wayne Allard
Senator Daniel Inouye
Senator Patrick Leahy
Senator Tom Harkin
Senator Barbara Mikulski
Senator Harry Reid
Senator Herb Kohl
Senator Patty Murray
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Richard Durbin
Senator Tim Johnson
Senator Mary Landrieu

Status of EPA Regional Library Closures and Reductions in Service:

(Specialized Libraries Not Included)

1. Closed

- Region 5, which served Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.
- Regions 6, which serves Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Iowa.
- Region 7, which serves Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.

2. Closed to the Public with Reduced Hours to EPA Staff

- Region 2 Library, which served New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

3. Reduced Access to EPA Staff and the Public

- EPA Region 1, which serves Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.
- EPA Region 9, which serves Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, the Pacific Islands, and Tribal Nations.
- EPA Region 10, which serves Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Native Tribes.
- EPA Headquarters



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U.S. Capitol switchboard 202-225-3121

