

American Library Association

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Contact Your Members of Congress and Ask Them to Sign LSTA, LSL Funding Request Letter

Please contact your Member in the U.S. House of Representatives TODAY and ask him/her to sign the "Dear Colleague" letter being circulated by Reps. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) and Timothy Johnson (R-IL), in support of funding for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries (LSL) Program.

[LSTA](#) and [LSL](#) are two of the most important programs for libraries today, and Reps. Grijalva and Johnson have written an excellent and commendable letter requesting the House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education include \$226.18 million for LSTA and \$100 million for LSL in the fiscal year (FY) 2008 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

When you contact your Representative, you must ask him/her to call Jennifer of Rep. Johnson's staff or Alethea of Rep. Grijalva's staff, in order to co-sign the letter. DO NOT CALL JENNIFER OR ALETHEA DIRECTLY.

It is very important that you contact your Representative **by 6:30 p.m. (Eastern Time), Wednesday, March 14.**

Please visit ALA's [Legislative Action Center](#) to email or fax your Member of Congress, or call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202-225-3121.

Representative David Obey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations

Representative James T. Walsh
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations

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Dear Chairman Obey and Representative Walsh:

We request that you include \$226.18 million for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and \$100 million for the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program in the fiscal year 2008 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Federal support for these programs encourage improved efficiencies and cost-effectiveness of library services, enhance shared public access to information, promote use of technology, sharing of resources, and other collaborations and outreach not feasible across local and state boundaries.

Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)

Around the country, knowledgeable librarians use LSTA funding, the only federal program solely devoted to aiding libraries, to help patrons access essential information on a wide range of topics. They provide training on resume development; job bank web searches; workshops on career information; links to essential educational and community services; assistive devices for people with disabilities; family literacy classes; homework help and mentoring programs, and so much more.

A January 2007 report by the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) concludes: "Public libraries are logical partners for local economic development initiatives that focus on people and quality of life. Libraries are widely available, highly regarded public institutions that provide a broad range of information services and support for diverse constituencies. Their open structure, combined with the power of new digital collections, technology, and training, position them to help communities make the transition from manufacturing and service economies to high tech and information economies."

Thanks to LSTA, libraries are also working to close the "digital divide" in many of our nation's distressed communities by providing no-fee, public access to computers and the Internet. In 1996, only 28 percent of public library systems offered public Internet access. Today, due to increased resources by the Congress and improved efforts by libraries across the country, more than 99.8 percent of library buildings offer no-fee public access computing, and 14 million Americans regularly use these computers.

While Internet use has increased substantially in the United States, nearly half of all American households still do not have computers or Internet access. By allocating \$216.18 million for LSTA, Congress could provide library users nationwide with improved access to information, and library services could be targeted to people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to people with limited literacy or skills. The President's request for \$226.18 million includes an increase in the state grant program, bringing funding for that program to \$171,500,000. This funding level will finally allow full implementation of a 2003 law to provide a more equitable distribution of state

formula grants.

Improving Literacy Through School Libraries

One of the central goals of the No Child Left Behind Act is a commitment to dramatically improve reading achievement among students. Both Congress and the Administration recognized that school libraries are critical partners in this effort when they included the Improving Literacy Through School Library program in the No Child Left Behind Act to improve student literacy skills and academic achievement by providing schools with up-to-date library materials, including well-equipped, technologically advanced school library media centers, and to ensure that school library media centers are staffed by professionally certified school library media specialists. The Department of Education's November 2005 evaluation of the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program found it has been successful in improving the quality of those school libraries receiving the grants.

We urge you to significantly boost funding for the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program to \$100 million. In FY 2006, out of approximately 520 applicants, only 78 grants were funded. In the 5 years grants have been awarded, nine states have never received funding under this program. When funds are equal to or greater than \$100 million, Improving Literacy Through School Library funds could be distributed as formula grants to every state's department of education.

The Library Services and Technology Act and the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program provide critical funding for libraries of all kinds nationwide. Only by including the President's request for \$226.18 million for the LSTA and \$100 million for the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program in the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill will we ensure that library patrons of all ages have sufficient access to library and information services, support recruiting and educating the next generation of librarians, and provide libraries the resources they need to improve literacy skills and academic achievement.

Sincerely,

Rep. Raúl Grijalva

Rep. Timothy Johnson



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