

*Resolution Commending President Barack Obama
on his Commitment to Openness and Transparency
in Government*

Whereas, An informed citizenry is essential to the democratic form of government; and

Whereas, The American Library Association has long advocated that access to government information is a public right and a principal function of the federal government and America's libraries have long served as a local point of access for government information; and

Whereas, On his first full day in office, President Barack Obama signed an executive order and two presidential memoranda heralding what he called a "new era of openness" and stated "[o]penness will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government;" and

Whereas, The Presidential Memorandum On Freedom of Information reestablishes a presumption of disclosure for information requested under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and President Obama said that "every agency and department should know that this administration stands on the side not of those who seek to withhold information, but those who seek to make it known;" and

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Whereas, President Obama also issued an executive order reversing changes made by President George W. Bush to the Presidential Records Act (PRA), stating he would hold himself and his own records "to a new standard of openness," permitting only the incumbent president (and not former presidents' heirs or designees or former vice presidents) to assert constitutional privileges to withhold information; and

Whereas, ALA was a participant in a coalition of more than 60 organizations that called on President Obama to reverse the secrecy trend and issue new directives on openness on Day One of his presidency; and, now, therefore, be it

Resolved, The American Library Association commends President Barack Obama for recognizing the importance of openness, transparency, and accountability in government by signing an executive order on Presidential Records and presidential memoranda on the Freedom of Information Act and Transparency and Open Government on his first day in office and looks forward to continuing to work with the Administration to advance public access and the public's right to know.

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Keith Michael Fiels
ALA Executive Director and ALA Council Secretary