

ALA's FY 2020 appropriations campaign kicks off

ALA's Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 congressional appropriations campaign began in March, and ALA urges all its members to participate by using ALA's action center (ala.org/takeaction) to contact their elected leaders ask them to invest in libraries.

Off to a late start

This year's appropriations campaign kicks off later than in recent years, another victim of the longest federal government shutdown in U.S. history. The traditional appropriations cycle starts in January, right after the release of the White House budget proposal to Congress. This budget is a statement of the president's spending priorities and prompts Congress to respond as part of their Constitutional duty to appropriate funds for the federal government.

The FY 2020 budget process, however, is unique. The 35-day partial government shutdown stalled much of the work needed to craft a budget document. One of the agencies impacted by the shutdown, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), plays a central role in developing the administration's budget. Shutdown rules prohibited OMB from working on any "nonessential" activities, which included working on FY 2020 budget documents.

Congressional appropriators will begin work on the FY 2020 spending bills as soon as the president submits his initial budget outline to Congress, which was slated for the week of March 11. ALA expects that libraries will, for the third year in a row, again find themselves targeted for elimination by an administration that fails to grasp the central role libraries play in communities across the country.

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As disappointing as it will be if (or more likely, when) the White House recommends elimination of funding for Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) program, the bipartisan support in Congress for these programs over the past two years gives reason to hope.

Take action to #FundLibraries

The "Dear Appropriator" campaign, where advocates call on their elected federal leaders to sign letters in support of LSTA and IAL, remains an important effort to defend federal funding for libraries. The success of library advocates in adding signatures to these letters sends a strong signal to Congress that libraries are important in communities.

Two letters in support of LSTA and IAL began circulating in the House in March. The House LSTA letter, led by Representatives Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) and Don Young (R-AK), calls on Congress to provide at least \$206.3 million for LSTA. A second House Dear Appropriator letter in the House, led by Representatives Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), Don Young (R-AK), and Jim McGovern (D-MA), calls on Congress to provide at least \$27 million for IAL. Companion letters in the Senate are scheduled for release later in the month.

Over the next few months, the House and Senate will work on their respective 12 spending bills, with the goal of bringing those bills to the House and Senate floors by mid-summer. Once appropriations are approved by each chamber, the real work of negotiations on a final budget begins for Congress—and more targeted advocacy begins for ALA.

To see your representative and senators' history of signing "Dear Appropriator" letters, visit ala.org/fundlibraries, where you'll also find information such as legislators' social media handles and creative ways to advocate for libraries. *ZZ*