

Key library issues are "popping" up in Congress, not unlike the spring flowers coming through the last vestiges of this winter's snow. The "new" 108th Congress seems to have settled in and many bills are being introduced and some acted upon.

LSTA

The House of Representatives passed H.R. 13, the Museum and Library Services Act of 2003, on March 6 in a 416 to 2 vote. H.R. 13 contains the primary federal library program, LSTA, as well as federal funding for museums. This is a major, but certainly not the final, hurdle for the reauthorization of LSTA. Thanks to all of the ACRL supporters who made calls to seek cosponsors for the House and Senate bills.

Major efforts are still needed in the Senate to get more cosponsors for S. 238, which now has 24 sponsors. Check <http://THOMAS.loc.gov> under the bill number to retrieve the most current list. Please contact your senators to ask them to sign on to S. 238. Senators interested in cosponsoring the legislation should contact Senator Jack Reed's staff person, Elyse Wasch, at (202) 224-4642.

E-surveillance and the USA PATRIOT Act

March 6 was also the date that Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont) introduced H.R. 1157, the Freedom to Read Protection Act of 2003. There are already 24 representatives of the bill but more, especially Republicans, are needed. Academic library supporters are also urged to ask their respective representatives to cosponsor the Sanders' bill. Other activities are starting on these issues in the Senate, not surprisingly under the leadership of Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont).

Vermont librarians were instrumental in pressing both local and federal action on surveillance and library patron confidentiality issues. Trina Magi, past president of the Vermont Library Association and a librarian at the University of Vermont, was an activist in getting 13 towns in Vermont to pass civil liberties resolutions about the USA PATRIOT Act. At the Sanders press conference she said "These provisions . . . already existed prior to the [PATRIOT] Act . . . and required

probable cause and judicial oversight. Now the USA PATRIOT Act expands these powers unnecessarily, and threatens the civil liberties of people who have committed no crimes."

H.R. 1157 would return the legal standards for the FBI to obtain court authorization to seek library patrons' and bookstore customers' records to the legal standards prior to passage of the USA PATRIOT Act in October 2001. These types of investigations are typically conducted under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), which was one of 15 major U.S. laws amended by the USA PATRIOT Act. H.R. 1157 also calls for public reporting to determine how provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act are being implemented in order to better assess civil liberties implications. For more information go to Sanders' Web site at <http://bernie.house.gov/>.

UCITA

The future of Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act (UCITA) looks doubtful after the American Bar Association (ABA) failed to approve a resolution that would approve UCITA's readiness for consideration in state legislatures. UCITA has generated enormous controversy within ABA in the past few months in anticipation of a vote on UCITA at the ABA's Midyear Meeting in Seattle, February 7-11. Six ABA sections voted to reject the resolution supporting UCITA. In the wake of this opposition, the drafters of UCITA withdrew the resolution from consideration. It is expected that UCITA's failure in ABA will be a deterrent to further UCITA introduction in state legislatures. Miriam Nisbet, ALA legislative counsel and president of Americans for Fair Electronic Commerce Transactions (AFFECT), the national coalition opposing UCITA, is ALA's representative to the ABA meeting.

ACRL played an important role in the development of a library community letter to the ABA regarding UCITA. In conjunction with the ALA Washington Office and other library associations, an open letter was sent to the ABA House of Delegates explaining the library problems with UCITA and asking them not to pass the resolution. More to report in next month's *C&RL News*. Check the ALA Washington Office Web site for updates. ■

Lynne E. Bradley is Office of Government Relations director of ALA's Washington Office, e-mail: leb@alawash.org