

WASHINGTON HOTLINE



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President's Budget. For the first time, President Reagan's budget assumes a modest federal role in support of libraries. However, the Administration's recommendation of \$76 million for fiscal year 1989 is based on legislation to be proposed later which would replace the Higher Education Act title II library programs and the Library Services and Construction Act, which received a combined total of \$135 million this year.

Of the \$76 million proposed, \$45 million would be for grants through state library agencies for services to the disadvantaged; \$30 million for resource sharing (\$20 million in state-based allocations and \$10 million in direct discretionary grants); and \$1 million for research and assessment. Some elements of HEA II (which currently receives \$10 million) might be eligible for funding under the \$10 million in proposed discretionary grants for resource sharing, but these would be "awarded for the development or expansion of library networks, with the emphasis on interstate networks," according to budget documents.

This appears to be a thoughtful proposal, although consolidations of programs are often a vehicle for reducing support. Coming after six years of pressing for elimination of library programs, it is a major shift in policy. However, academic and research library programs would seem to be particularly at risk in the sketchy outline of the proposed legislation. There appear to be no grants for academic library resources, no fellowships in librarianship, no grants targeted to major research libraries, no technology grants specifically for academic libraries. The latter (HEA II-D) has just been funded for the first time at \$3.6 million. At this writing, the Education Department had not yet issued regulations (expected about the end of March) or invited applications, yet ED had received several hundred inquiries from potential applicants.

In Congress, the Budget and Appropriations Committees will have to act on the basis of library programs in current law, not on legislation to be proposed later. For all existing Department of Education library programs, the recommendation is zero. Last year's deficit reduction agreement imposed caps on defense and domestic spending for FY '89, but Congress must set priorities among domestic programs. Congressional leaders and presidential candidates have all claimed education as a priority.

Action needed. The aim is to translate election year rhetoric into reality. Time needed for campaigning will shorten the congressional session, and funding decisions may be made more quickly than usual. This is the time to contact legislators, particularly members of House and Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittees, to urge continued funding of HEA II college and research library programs.

Legislative Day. I look forward to seeing many of you at Legislative Day in Washington, D.C., on April 19. Some states may still need academic library representation in the group coming to Washington. Contact the state library association concerning arrangements for joining your state's library delegation.