

Advocacy: Key to your library's success

Advocacy is a word you might hear on a regular basis, but might not know *exactly* what it means in relation to libraries. On a basic level, advocacy is simply voicing your support for your library and encouraging others to do the same. It comes in the form of letting people know what new resources are available in your library. It means starting a dialogue within your organization, or with a state representative or a U.S. senator. It might mean speaking out as an individual or lending a voice to other voices in a more organized campaign. This is advocacy, and it works!

The ALA Washington Office's specialty is grassroots advocacy on federal issues, and below are a few things we recommend for getting the word out about your library and how important it is.

Call, e-mail, or fax your member of Congress

Tell your member of Congress how cuts in funding—whether that funding be for your university or organization—will directly affect your library and how increases will help.

The ALA Legislative Action Center (capwiz.com/ala/home): is a great place to see what library-related legislation is hot and fax a letter to Congress. Let them hear your voice!

Call your legislators: Just call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 225-3121 and ask to speak with your representative or senator. If you don't know who your legislators are, visit www.house.gov or www.senate.gov.

Meet with Your member of Congress

Members want to meet with constituents! Simply call the district office to either make an appointment or to learn the schedule of town hall meetings. Ask the candidates what

they will do to reverse cuts and increase the federal government's investment in universities and research libraries.

Invite your member of Congress to visit your library

Let members see for themselves the positive contributions federal dollars make to your library. Simply send a short letter of invitation, and follow up with the district office scheduler.

Contact local media

Write a letter to the editor, call radio talk shows, or generate interest in the issue among local newspaper, radio, or television reporters. Give reporters examples of success stories from your library and what is at risk if funds are inadequate.

Start speaking out! The best way to influence those who control the policies and the purse strings is for those who use and value library services to speak out. With the federal government now cutting financial resources to libraries across the country, one of the ways to remedy the drain on library funding resources is for people to continue pressuring lawmakers to make sure that libraries get their fair share of federal financial resources. The more people who speak out, the stronger the voice of libraries. Members of Congress want to hear from constituents about issues that are important to their communities.

And, finally, don't forget:

Stay in touch with the ALA's Washington Office: Stop by the front page of the Web site (www.ala.org/ala/washoff) every day to make sure you know exactly what's going on in Congress.

Subscribe to ALAWON: The ALA Washington Office Newline (ALAWON) is a free e-mail publication of the ALA Washington Office, keeping library advocates up to date on major legislative issues in the nation's capital. ¶

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