

Testimony of Kathi Kromer

Associate Executive Director of the American Library Association

On Funding for the Library of Congress and Government Publishing Office

Before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch

Public Witness Hearing

April 17, 2018

On behalf of the American Library Association, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony regarding Legislative Branch Appropriations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019. We write in support of the budget requests of the Library of Congress and the Government Publishing Office, which provide valuable national services that benefit libraries and the public nationwide.

Library of Congress

The Library of Congress provides an array of services to Congress, libraries, and the American public. The Library of Congress is the largest library in the world, with millions of items in its collections. Through its ongoing work to acquire, organize, provide access to, and preserve these collections, the Library of Congress supports research, learning, and innovation nationwide.

The vital services of the Library of Congress include, for instance, the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, a free national library program that provides braille and recorded materials to people who cannot see regular print or handle print materials. This national program includes a network of regional libraries, such as the Kansas Talking Books Regional Library and the Ohio Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled, which provide services to users in those communities.

We also note our support for the ongoing modernization efforts at the Copyright Office, which has been working collaboratively with the Library of Congress's Office of the Chief Information Officer. While currently, most Copyright Office records are in paper formats, the office intends to make copyright records available online, which will make it easier for libraries to help users ascertain the rightsholder status of works.

In addition, we are grateful that the FY 2018 appropriations law will require public access to nonconfidential reports by the Congressional Research Service, which for the first time will allow libraries nationwide to provide authentic copies of these useful reports to the public.

Government Publishing Office

The Government Publishing Office (GPO) also provides important services to the public and America's libraries. GPO's online repository of government information and the public information programs of

GPO's Superintendent of Documents provide essential information to America's businesses, legal system, researchers, and the general public.

These programs include the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), a collaboration between the federal government and more than 1,100 participating libraries. These libraries, such as the Johnson County Library in Overland Park, Kansas, and the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County in Youngstown, Ohio, help the public access federal information.

While libraries value the FDLP, participating libraries incur significant unfunded costs in order to provide services to the public. We encourage the Subcommittee to request that GPO study the creation of a grant-making program to support Federal Depository Libraries in providing permanent public access to federal information.¹

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee in support of the FY 2019 requests of the Library of Congress and the Government Publishing Office. We ask for the Subcommittee's support in meeting the requests for these important national programs that serve Congress, libraries, and the American public.

Sincerely,



Kathi Kromer
Associate Executive Director, Washington Office

Enclosure

Established in 1876, the American Library Association is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization created to provide leadership in the transformation and the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services as well as the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.

¹ For additional information about this suggestion, please refer to the enclosed letter from the American Library Association, Association of Research Libraries, American Association of Law Libraries, and Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, dated April 6, 2018.



April 6, 2018

The Honorable Kevin Yoder
Subcommittee on Legislative Branch Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable James Lankford
Subcommittee on Legislative Branch Appropriations
U.S. Senate

Dear Chairman Yoder and Chairman Lankford,

On behalf of the American Library Association, the Association of Research Libraries, the American Association of Law Libraries, and the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, we write to ask for your continued support for the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) and other Public Information Programs of the Superintendent of Documents within the Government Publishing Office (GPO). In particular, we ask for your support for a study by GPO of grant-making to Federal Depository Libraries.

The FDLP is a decades-long collaboration between libraries and the federal government to ensure that members of the public have effective and long-term access to government information. Although libraries value the FDLP, participating libraries incur significant unfunded costs in order to provide services to the public under the program. These unfunded costs have led to a net decline in the number of Federal Depository Libraries of 18 percent since 1988, reducing the public's access to this vital program.

In recognition of this challenge, in testimony before the Committee on House Administration in July 2017, then-Director of GPO Davita Vance-Cooks suggested that Congress consider giving GPO the authority to make grants to Federal Depository Libraries. We believe this idea is worthy of further exploration. Therefore, we ask the Subcommittee to request that GPO study the creation of a grant-making program to support the services of Federal Depository Libraries in providing permanent public access to federal information. In doing so, we also urge the Subcommittee to encourage GPO to coordinate with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and to consult with stakeholders, including the Depository Library Council and library associations, about how such a program might be administered.

Our association appreciates the Subcommittee's support of the FDLP. We look forward to continuing to work with the Subcommittee to ensure this program carries out its important mission of providing the American public with transparency and access to government information. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gavin R. Baker, Assistant Director of Government Relations
American Library Association

Prudence S. Adler, Associate Executive Director
Association of Research Libraries

Emily Feltren, Director of Government Relations
American Association of Law Libraries

Timothy Cherubini, Executive Director
Chief Officers of State Library Agencies

cc: The Honorable Tim Ryan, Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on Legislative Branch Appropriations
The Honorable Chris Murphy, Ranking Member, Senate Subcommittee on Legislative Branch Appropriations