

Telecommunications legislation fails

A major rearrangement of the telecommunications regulatory landscape came very close to passing Congress this year. In June the House passed two major bills—H.R. 3626, the Antitrust and Communications Reform Act, and H.R. 3636, the National Communications and Competition and Information Infrastructure Act.

The Senate Commerce Committee approved in August a substitute version of S. 1822, the Communications Act of 1994. By late September the bill was declared dead by its sponsor, Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-SC). Both Hollings and Vice-President Al Gore blamed Bell phone company opposition for S. 1822's failure. For libraries, schools, and certain nonprofits, the bills would have required the FCC to initiate rulemakings for preferential rates. S. 1822 incorporated the additional concept of reserving capacity for certain eligible entities at incremental cost-based rates, using language from S. 2195, the National Public Telecommunications Infrastructure Act.

Another end-of-session casualty was H.R. 820, the National Competitiveness Act, which never emerged from House-Senate conference committee due to disagreements over trade provisions and regulatory flexibility. Consensus had been reached on the bill's high-performance computing and networking applications. Originally passed as H.R. 1757 in July 1993 and as S. 4 (title VI) in March 1994, these provisions defined the components—networking research and development, experimental testbed networks, and network access support. The bills authorized network applications for education (especially K-12), health care, libraries, government information, and manufacturing.

Grants funded

Congress more than doubled the funding for the Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program administered by the National Telecommunications and Informa-



tion Administration. The first 92 grants under the program were announced in October. FY94 funding was \$26 million; of the \$100 million requested by the administration for FY 95, \$64 million was appropriated. The matching grants are designed to help nonprofit entities connect to electronic networks for the delivery of social and governmental services and information.

Administration activity

Librarians have been particularly supportive of two Clinton administration goals for the National Information Infrastructure (NII): 1) that all schools, libraries, hospitals, and clinics be connected to it by the year 2000, and 2) telecommunication regulatory reform should include preferential rates for libraries and schools as well as the concept of the public right-of-way in all telecommunications. These are also elements that libraries and education supporters will want to see included in various legislative and regulatory efforts anticipated for 1995.

The administration's Information Infrastructure Task Force (IITF) and its committees and working groups have been active this year. The IITF Information Policy Committee moved forward on implementing a Government Information Locator Service. Vice-President Gore unveiled a multimedia electronic citizens' handbook on the White House and federal agencies in October. Also, the U.S. Postal Service announced a "citizen kiosk" pilot program at post offices and other public sites for electronic transactions such as purchase of stamps, license applications, and government forms, and for access to government information.

Postal rates

ALA provided oral argument on October 21 in the last hearings before the Postal Rate Commission in the pending general rate case. The Postal Service has proposed a 73.7% increase in the fourth-class library postal rate, much higher than the 10.3% average increase requested of other postal rates. ALA cited ample precedent for rejecting an implausibly high rate increase even without evidence identifying

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specific errors in the USPS data. A decision is expected before the end of the year.

Government Printing Office

The Government Printing Office (GPO) implemented the 1993 Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act with online access to the *Congressional Record*, *Federal Register*, and congressional bills. GPO also announced in October the first sites among federal depository libraries for free public access on- and off-site to GPO Access databases as part of its gateway program. The federal depository library at the University of Missouri, Columbia, and the Columbia Online Information Network at the Daniel Boone Regional Library, are working cooperatively to offer free public access to the GPO databases as part of the expanding gateway program. Another depository library gateway will soon open to the public at the University of Illinois at Chicago on the LUIS system.

Intellectual property

A series of hearings on fair use have been held and work continues within the administration's Intellectual Property working group chaired by Bruce Lehman, Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks. Edward Valauskas, chair of the ALA Committee on Legislation's Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Copyright, was the first witness at the September hearing in Chicago on the administration's recent report on intellectual property. The ALA testimony included three basic recommendations: 1) a balanced policy framework is essential for the NII, 2) expanded limitations must accompany any expanded rights for proprietors, and 3) a new national Commission on New Technological Uses (CONTU) is needed. ALA's testimony was endorsed by the American Association of Law Libraries, the Association of Academic Health Science Library Directors, the Association of Research Libraries, the Medical Library Association, the National Humanities Alliance, and the Special Libraries Association.

Gloria Werner (UCLA) testified in September at the Los Angeles hearing on the intellectual property report. She spoke on behalf of ARL and the same group of library and scholarly organizations. Sarah E. Cox (University of Connecticut School of Law), chair of ACRL's Copyright Committee, represents ACRL in ongoing conferences sponsored by the Patents and Trademarks Office on fair proceedings of the fair use guidelines for higher education. ■

(Meeting list cont. from page 740)

German Social Sciences Working Group: Sunday, February 5, 8:00-9:00 a.m.

Internet: Tuesday, February 7, 8:00-9:00 a.m.

Martinus Nijhoff Study Grant Jury: Sunday, February 5, 4:30-5:30 p.m. (closed)

Nominating: Monday, February 6, 9:30-11:00 a.m. (closed)

Preconference—1997: Monday, February 6, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Publications: Tuesday, February 7, 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Research and Planning: Sunday, February 5, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Romance Languages Discussion Group: Monday, February 6, 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Women's Studies Section

Executive: Saturday, February 4, 2:00-4:00 p.m.; Monday, February 6, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Collection Development and Bibliography: Sunday, February 5, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Communications: Sunday, February 5, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Conference Program Planning—Chicago, 1995: Sunday, February 5, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Discussion Meeting: Monday, February 6, 9:30-11:00 a.m.

General Membership: Sunday, February 5, 4:30-5:30 p.m.

Publications: Sunday, February 5, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Social Issues/Education: Sunday, February 5, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Technical Services: Sunday, February 5, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. ■

(Candidates cont. from page 733)

Women's Studies Section

Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect: *Cynthia S. Faries*, Reference and Women's Studies Librarian, Pennsylvania State University; *Bonnie Jean Cox*, Head, Collection Development Department, University of Kentucky.

Secretary: *Emilie Ngo-Nguidjol*, Reference/Instruction Librarian, University of Wisconsin, Madison; *Rita Pellen*, Assistant Director for Public Services, Head Reference/Collection Development, Florida Atlantic University.

Member-at-Large: *Thura R. Mack*, Reference Librarian/Assistant Professor, University of Tennessee, Knoxville; *Bernice I. Redfern*, Reference Librarian, San Jose State University. ■