

New developments since September 11

The tragic events of September 11 have changed our lives in so many ways. Certainly here in Washington, as it is likely in your libraries and on your campuses, we have hardly begun to appreciate fully how our daily lives have changed, but we have already seen major changes in the library legislative agenda.

For example, before September 11, ALA was monitoring the slow progress of many diverse privacy bills on financial, medical, and other personal information records. It was not fully clear to the privacy coalitions with which we work just where privacy legislation was moving, especially regarding federal preemption of state laws.

After September 11 we have major anti-terrorism legislation, including provisions affecting personal privacy. As we go to press, there are bills in the House and Senate, H.R. 2975 and S. 1510, likely the first set of many anti-terrorism bills. These bills include provisions expanding wiretapping to Internet communications and lowering many of the standards to apply trap and trace, pen registers, or other devices for tapping electronic communications.

A provision sought by the Bush Administration to ease access to student records has been removed, but a similar provision on "business records" is very broad sweeping and potentially affects library and school records. ALA has been working with sister library associations and a broad coalition now called the In Defense of Freedom Coalition. A joint statement from ALA and two of our sister library associations is on the Web at <http://www.ala.org/washoff/terrorismletter.pdf>.

Before September 11, the issues surrounding FY2002 appropriations bills were contentious. Several of the 13 appropriations bills had passed, but key ones, such as education funding, were and are still pending. At this writing, Congress has passed CRs or continu-

ing resolutions to fund the federal government through mid-October. These CRs may continue into the near future rather than have Congress revisit some of the more difficult disputes on appropriations issues. A CR continues funding at last year's levels, which for key library programs is higher than what Bush and others had been advocating for FY2002 (<http://www.ala.org/washoff/funding.html>).

Before September 11, we were working on S. 803, the E-government Act of 2001, anticipating further work this fall on issues of permanent public access to government information and the pros and cons of establishing a government-wide chief information officer. After September 11, work on S. 803 was postponed until at least early next year in the second session of the 107th Congress (<http://www.ala.org/washoff/governmentinfo.html>).

Reauthorization of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) remains an extremely important issue that needs grassroots support now. LSTA affects all types of libraries, including academic, public, and school libraries, and is the only federal legislation that funds libraries exclusively. To assure reauthorization by September 30, 2002, library advocates are encouraged to start letting their senators and representatives know now about the importance of LSTA and press for it to be reauthorized in a timely fashion.

The proposed bill encourages all types of libraries to make use of this funding, and would raise the authorization to \$500 million. This means that more funds will be available for state-based grants and local programs, National Leadership Grants, and grants to Native American libraries.

For more information about LSTA and to get a brochure about how you can assist in this effort, visit the new LSTA Web site at <http://www.ala.org/washoff/lsta.html>.

During this challenging period, legislative and political concerns remain very fluid. It is especially important for the library community to maintain our advocacy efforts. Call our office if you have any questions. ■

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