

Washington Hotline



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Congress adjourned the first session of the 102nd Congress just before Thanksgiving. Among the items receiving last-minute approval were the following:

NREN. Legislation to establish the National Research and Education Network is on its way to the White House at this writing, and the President is expected to sign it. On November 20 and 22, the House and Senate each passed a final House-Senate compromise version of S. 272, the High-Performance Computing Act first introduced by Sen. Albert Gore Jr. (D-TN). Several last-minute hurdles had to be overcome and the inevitable compromises were made. Nevertheless, the bill's provisions regarding libraries and education remain essentially intact.

Funding. Congress increased funding for Higher Education Act library programs 66.6 percent for fiscal year 1992, despite a zero budget request for these programs by President Bush. The HEA II-B library fellowship program was increased by \$5 million, a level of funding not matched for more than 20 years.

The HEA section 607 program for acquisition of periodicals published outside the United States (under the HEA title VI international education program) received first-time funding of \$500,000. This funding for section 607 was just in time; the Senate bill to reauthorize the entire Higher Education Act omitted authorizations for unfunded programs, but will restore a separate \$1 million authorization for section 607 when the bill reaches the Senate floor next year. (The House version, also scheduled for floor action next year, would authorize \$8.5 million for section 607.)

The HEA II-D college library technology program was increased by \$2.5 million. However, House-Senate conferees agreed to Senate language which earmarks the II-D increase for a biotechnology information education demonstration project at Iowa State University in the home state of Tom Harkin (D-IA), Senate subcommittee chairman.

The original bill containing funding for education and library programs was vetoed by President Bush over one provision which would have restricted use of funds to promulgate regulations barring employees of federally funded health clinics from discussing abortion with their patients. A new bill with identical funding levels but without the abortion counseling provision was developed, passed, and signed after the House failed by 12 votes to override the veto.

Final funding levels for FY 1992 for selected programs of interest to *C&RL News* readers are shown in the table on the next page.

FINAL FUNDING LEVELS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1992

PROGRAM	FY 91 FUNDING	FY 92 FUNDING
GPO SuDocs	\$25,745,000	\$26,327,000
HEA II-B lib. training	651,000	5,000,000
II-B lib. research	325,000	325,000
II-C research libraries	5,855,000	5,855,000
II-D college lib. tech.	3,904,000	6,404,000
IV-C college work study	594,681,000	615,000,000
VI international educ.	28,669,000	34,000,000
VI-A, Sec. 607 foreign jrls.	0	500,000
Library of Congress	305,071,000	322,228,000
LSCA I public library services	83,898,000	83,898,000
II pub. lib. construction	19,218,000	16,718,000
III interlibrary cooperation	19,908,000	19,908,000
V for. lang. mtrls. pub. libs.	976,000	976,000
VI library literacy	8,163,000	8,163,000
National Agricultural Library	16,798,000	17,715,000
National Archives	126,969,000	146,143,000
Natl. Ctr. for Educ. Statistics	63,524,000	77,213,000
NCLIS	732,000	831,000
Natl. Endowment for Humanities	170,005,000	175,955,000
Natl. Historical Pubs. & Records Com.	5,250,000	5,400,000
National Library of Medicine & MLAA	91,408,000	100,303,000
Postal revenue forgone subsidy	472,592,000	470,000,000

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When I attended the first group meeting on "Access to Government Information in the Electronic Age," I took along a copy of the WHCLISII recommendations. It turned out that the members were thrilled to have language already written upon which we could draw for resolutions. In particular, WHCLISII Recommendation No: ACC04-1, which calls for Congress to amend the Freedom of Information Act, was used as a prototype for one of the First Amendment Congress resolutions.

The resolution on amending the Freedom of Information Act calls for a national conference to draft strategies for addressing the complex problems of electronic access to government information at all levels. Library associations, including ALA, will be invited to participate in the national conference, and the WHCLISII recommendations will undoubtedly be useful once again.

Other WHCLISII recommendations that were useful in our discussions include those regarding open access to government information regardless of format (NIP03-1) and inappropriate classification of public information (NIP03-4).

I was somewhat surprised by the praise heaped on librarians by almost everyone I met. The lawyers and journalists voiced sincere appreciation for the resources and services they find in libraries, as well as for the librarians they encounter. I heard many comments about what great lobbyists librarians are, and how we can get the ear of politicians when others cannot. It seems librarians have a reputation for being politically neutral and primarily concerned with the public interest and ethical issues such as unrestricted access to public information, privacy protection for library users, fundamental principles of the Freedom of Information Act, and intellectual freedom. One law professor from the University of Florida said some of his profession's causes would have been lost over the past four years if it had not been for the support of librarians.

I hope other ALA and ACRL members will find similar opportunities to utilize WHCLISII recommendations. Only through promoting the recommendations and maintaining the network of those interested in public policy as it relates to library issues can the work of WHCLISII continue to be effective. ■ ■