

At time of writing during the lame duck session in Congress, much is up in the air in Washington. ALA will continue to work with library champions in the lame duck session and in the 117th Congress to ensure libraries are part of any future federal relief bills.

Final COVID relief package in 2020

Conversations on COVID relief funding are intensifying as some relief programs are set to expire by the end of December. House and Senate members are working to pass an emergency assistance plan before adjourning for the year. House and Senate leadership are using the bipartisan “COVID Emergency Relief Framework” as a starting point for their negotiations. Introduced on December 1, the Framework includes funding for expanding overall broadband access and education but provides nothing directly for America’s libraries.

ALA is urging Congress to include direct library broadband and stabilization funding in the relief package. On December 6, ALA issued a call to action urging library advocates to contact their U.S. representatives and senators with an ask to provide funding for libraries in the relief package, likely to be the last relief bill before Congress for several months.

Federal budget update: FY2021

As of December 8, Congress is working to pass yet another continuing resolution to avoid a government shutdown on December 11, as Congress has not yet negotiated a final Fiscal Year 2021 budget. If Congress manages to pass a FY2021 budget that resembles current drafts in the House and Senate, libraries can again expect yet another increase for IMLS—five years in a row.

2020 elections and libraries

The November 3, 2020, elections will have a significant impact on public policy and advocacy for libraries. Based on campaign pledges, the incoming Biden-Harris administration will be more favorable to education investment and the values

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of equity, diversity, and inclusion. President-Elect Biden’s cabinet selections will likely indicate a significant shift in policy around higher education, telecommunications, and many other areas.

The change of leadership in the White House does not automatically translate into wins for libraries. Votes cast further down the ballot will have a major impact on the decision making in the next Congress. It appears Republicans will maintain control of the U.S. Senate. The final determination will come after two Senate runoff elections, both in Georgia, to be held January 5. While Democrats managed to hold the majority in the House of Representatives, enough Republican seats were won to warrant adjustments on committees critical to library interests, such as funding (Appropriations), education (Education and Labor), and copyright (Judiciary).

Moving forward, we cannot assume library, education, and workforce spending will be any easier. The new Congress and administration will be dealing with a worsening pandemic, along with extraordinary needs and demands from every sector of society. Library advocates must engage decision makers by email, phone, and social media to show them how libraries serve their constituents and why libraries should be a priority under their leadership.

ALA will offer insights into library-related federal policy developments and strategies for engaging Congress in an all-digital environment during 2021 Midwinter Virtual. The best way to stay updated on library policy issues and news, developments on the federal budget, and current advocacy opportunities, follow ALA’s Public Policy and Advocacy Office on Twitter at [@LibraryPolicy](https://twitter.com/LibraryPolicy) and visit ala.org/advocacy/advocacy-public-policy. *KK*

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