

ALA joins digital inclusion advocates to launch Airwaves for Equity coalition

ALA, along with eight of the nation's leading digital equity organizations, recently announced the launch of Airwaves for Equity, a coalition focused on asking Congress to dedicate the net proceeds from future spectrum auctions to support digital literacy and inclusion efforts.

The coalition consists of ALA, the Benton Institute for Broadband and Society, the Center for Rural Strategies, Common Sense Media, Consumer Reports, National Digital Inclusion Alliance, Public Knowledge, the Open Technology Institute at New America, and the Schools Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition.

ALA has long endorsed efforts in Congress and at the FCC to improve rural and tribal broadband access and to increase the amount of unlicensed spectrum available to support critical library technology services. ALA Senior Director of Public Policy and Government Relations Alan Inouye, who spoke at the launch webinar in February, said "ALA is ready and eager to make a big leap with the Airwaves for Equity initiative to advocate for sustainable federal investments in digital literacy and inclusion that could support services libraries have long excelled at."

Airwaves for Equity proposes that Congress dedicate a substantial portion of wireless spectrum auction revenues to endow a Digital Equity Foundation. The goal is to provide sustainable funding for initiatives designed to promote digital literacy and inclusion, from local digital navigator programs and telehealth to disability access and efforts to close the learning gap.

Leaders from both parties on the Senate Commerce Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee have embraced the concept of dedicating auction proceeds to help close the digital divide in other recent legislation. Because the FCC's auction authority must be extended this year, the needed legislation will create an opportunity to leverage revenues from the invisible natural resource owned by the American people that has become essential as the Internet goes wireless: the public airwaves.

For more information on Airwaves for Equity, visit www.airwavesforequity.org.