

With less than a month until the mid-term elections, no pollster is certain what the outcomes will be. However, those in the library world who have long championed library issues on the federal level know that it really doesn't matter.

What matters is that library advocacy for many of the items on the ALA's legislative agenda continues—regardless of who's in charge and by how many seats—as many issues continue to be unresolved. (Or in some cases, our association would say “uncorrected,” see the USA PATRIOT ACT.)

Increasing grassroots efforts during the final months of the year and the current Congress—a time often characterized by a lack of activity—may seem fruitless but is actually critical to maintaining our momentum in an era of competing interests and tight purse strings.

“Advocacy is more than just a single action on a single day; it's about building relationships, and this election is an excellent opportunity to build new relationships as well as build upon old ones before we need them the most,” says Kristin Murphy, government relations specialist for the ALA Washington Office.

For academic libraries, open access and related legislation continue to be a top priority. In particular, lobbying efforts have focused on two pieces of legislation that may not be voted on this year but will surely resurface in the 112th Congress—the Federal Research Public Access Act of 2009 (FRPAA) and the legislation to open the Congressional Research Service (CRS).

The House version of FRPAA, H.R. 5037, would require agencies and departments with annual extramural research budgets over \$100 million to make available via the Internet the final manuscript of articles resulting from research funded by U.S. taxpayers. The Senate version is S. 1373.

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The last major action regarding FRPPA took place on July 29 when the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform's Information Policy, Census and National Archives Subcommittee held hearing on H.R. 5037.

Lynne Bradley, director of the ALA Office of Government Relations (OGR), says it is uncertain whether this legislation will be taken up before the conclusion of this Congress, but the library community should press on with contacting their members of Congress to ask for passage of these bills to ensure the public has no-fee, timely access to federally funded research.

Likewise, S.R. 118 and H.R. 3762—resolutions that would allow public access to the majority of CRS reports—are currently in committee with no clear signs of movement before the end of the year.

For the past several years, librarians, academics, journalists, open government advocates, and concerned citizens have urged Congress to provide free, public access through the Internet to the unclassified, taxpayer-funded reports produced by CRS. Taxpayers spend over \$100 million a year to fund CRS, which generates detailed reports for lawmakers. These reports play a critical role in our political process, but have never been made available in a consistent manner to the public.

While it seems outlandish that an Administration and Congress that pride themselves on openness have failed to pass this commonsense resolution, Bradley says library advocates should not be deterred but should charge ahead with grassroots lobbying efforts.

“Whether these bills are addressed this fall or not, if librarians do not put their voices where their hearts are, we will fail, and special interests will prevail over the public interest in open access,” Bradley says.

For information on becoming a part of the ACRL Legislative Network, go to [www.acrl.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/issues/washingtonwatch/acrladvocates.cfm](http://www.acrl.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/issues/washingtonwatch/acrladvocates.cfm). *zt*