

ALA joins WiFi coalition

ALA has joined WiFiForward, a new coalition calling on policymakers to unleash unlicensed spectrum for Wi-Fi and other uses. Recent analyses indicate that Wi-Fi in our homes, businesses, libraries, and schools is becoming congested by a deluge of data from an increasing number of devices, applications, and services connecting to the Internet without wires. WiFiForward is an ad hoc group of companies, organizations, and public sector institutions working to alleviate the Wi-Fi spectrum crunch. In addition to ALA, members include the Schools, Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition; Google; Comcast; Microsoft; Consumer Electronics Association; and International Association of Venue Managers.

ALA, ARL, and EDUCAUSE re-engage FCC on network neutrality

In January, the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled to strike down most of the Open Internet Order, giving commercial companies the astounding legal authority to block Internet traffic, offer preferential treatment to certain Internet services or applications, and steer users to certain websites based on their own commercial interests. In a letter sent to Chairman Tom Wheeler, ALA with ARL and EDUCAUSE, seek to work with the Federal Communications Commission in developing new policies that preserve network neutrality and incorporate the essential roles our institutions play in this area.

E-rate advocacy continues


In February, ALA responded to President Obama's speech on Internet access and education (Obama did not mention libraries). Emily Sheketoff, executive director of the ALA Washington Office, wrote: "We hope

the President will recognize and engage the power of libraries and librarians in connecting communities and achieving the vision for 21st-century education and a globally competitive economy." Later that month, ALA responded to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler's e-rate speech, where he emphasized the crucial role of libraries as the "community on-ramp to the world of information." ALA staff have been in weekly contact with FCC officials to advocate for ALA's position, including multiple in-person meetings at FCC headquarters.

ALA recognizes Rep. Holt's leadership

We are sad to report that Representative Rush Holt (D-New Jersey) announced his retirement from the U.S. House of Representatives in February, ending 16 years of service. ALA expresses its deepest appreciation for the distinguished work of Holt, a leader who has worked tirelessly to support public, academic, and school libraries nationwide. Holt introduced the Workforce Investments through Local Libraries Act to integrate libraries into job training efforts. Holt has also been a consistent supporter of the Library Services and Technology Act, the only federal funding program exclusively for libraries.

ALA leads on privacy issues

In January, ALA President Barbara Stripling released a statement regarding a speech President Barack Obama made on the National Security Agency (NSA) surveillance program. In a statement, Stripling called for permanent changes to the NSA data collection program. Additionally, Stripling called for support for the USA Freedom Act, a bill that will improve the balance between terrorism prevention and personal privacy protection. In February, ALA participated in the Day We Fight Back, a day when thousands of websites hosted banners urging people to call Congress to stop mass surveillance. 

Jazzy Wright is press officer of the ALA Washington Office, e-mail: jwright@alawash.org