

Lobbying Congress for Support of Libraries

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Federal databases are disappearing, or information in them, such as climate change and military women's heroic deeds, are being deleted. A list of terms is used to delete data, including women, female, tribal, Black, Hispanic, and nuclear power. For the complete list, go to the "U. S. Government Information Weekly Roundup" managed by Kelley Smith, Government Information Librarian at the University of California, San Diego.¹ Librarians have downloaded the information from many of these databases. However, this does not assure the restoration of these databases. The White House wants the Institute for Museums and Libraries abolished. ALA is suing to ensure the continued existence of the Institute and its grants program, helping museums and libraries.²

Librarians can help the public understand the importance of these programs by creating exhibits and sponsoring talks by former agency employees to explain what these agencies do. The documents librarians in Federal Depository libraries should volunteer to help librarians educate the public about what services government agencies provide the public. Now is the time to lobby members of Congress to ensure the continued existence of the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP). There will be members of Congress who want to save money by downsizing the amount of money for the FDLP. Every FDLP librarian needs to ask their library directors, library associations, college professors, and researchers dependent on access to government information to urge the members of the House and Senate appropriation committees to fund the FDLP fully.

To lobby your members of Congress, visit the local office of your Senators and Representatives to give them information about the FDLP libraries in their state and district. Ask them to share that information with their member's office in D.C. Invite them to visit your library and encourage the members they work for to visit your library. Check out your member of Congress on their website to see which committees they serve on. If you support funding for FDLP libraries, ask if your member has a staffer on the Committee on House Administration, the Senate Rules Committee, the Joint Committee on Printing, and the House and Senate appropriations committees. If so, they are the staffers you need to talk to about funding FDLP libraries.

Contact your state library association to see what plans are being made for lobbying Congress. Is there a legislation committee that you can work with to identify issues of importance in your state? Find out who from your state will be lobbying Congress for your state's library association. Ask if anyone from your state association is going to D.C. to lobby. Find out if any librarians in your district or state worked on a member's election campaign, are related to someone working for a member of Congress in D.C. or the local office or went to school with the member or a staffer. Ask those librarians to go to the member's office with you.

Once you decide on the issues you will discuss with your member of Congress, start collecting stories about how a particular law or appropriation has helped libraries in your state or district. If you have a bill you want supported, come with the name and number of the bill. If your association has passed a resolution or developed a statement supporting a bill or an issue, bring copies for the member or staffer. Send a thank you letter. Ask about the status of your bill, appropriation, or investigation every week and offer to provide additional information and the names of librarians in their district who would be good witnesses at a hearing. Contact staff enough that they know you by first name.

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References

1. Kelly L. Smith. "U.S. Government Information: Home," UC San Diego, <https://ucsd.libguides.com/usgov>.
2. "Restore IMLS: ALA Goes to Court," *American Library Association*, <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/IMLS-lawsuit>.