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Library Services Improvement Act (1989): Speech 03

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Statement by Senator Claiborne Pell
Committee on Labor and Human Resources
Executive Session
July 20, 1989

The Library Services and Construction Act Amendments of 1989 is legislation that will reauthorize the Library Services and Construction Act, the most important source of federal funds for our nation's public libraries. This Act, which was first signed into law in 1956, has served our national public library community by making it possible for library services to reach the physically handicapped, the institutionalized and the underserved.

Throughout 6 reauthorizations, this Act been amended to meet additional needs of the elderly, those who are limited-English speaking and major urban libraries. It has evolved over the years in response to the changing needs of our citizens - and in my mind has done a tremendously effective job.

The legislation before us today provides for a five year extension of the LSCA and with minor modifications that are included in response to requests from the library community and the Department of Education. Two areas do receive increased emphasis - technology and preservation - since the projected needs in these areas are not adequately provided for in current law. States are given greater latitude in using LSCA funds for the purchase and maintenance of technological equipment and they are given the option of using title III monies for developing programs to address preservation needs. This added emphasis on preservation is an area of special interest to me and I hope it will encourage libraries to protect endangered materials and preserve them for future generations.

A White House Conference on Library and Information Services is now authorized to be held before September, 1991. Any significant changes to the LSCA should await the outcome of this conference and be incorporated into future amendments to this Act.

I am pleased to support this legislation and urge my colleagues on the Committee to join me in reaffirming our commitment to the nation's public libraries.

SENATE APPROVES EXTENSION OF LIBRARY SERVICES AND CONSTRUCTION
ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1989

The United States Senate today approved a five year extension of the major federal programs supporting the nation's libraries. According to Senator Claiborne Pell (D,RI), the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities, "this Act, which was first signed into law in 1956 by President Eisenhower, continues to be the single most significant source of federal funds for these institutions which are of such basic importance to an informed American citizenry."

The legislation passed today would continue to provide funding to the states in such important areas as library services to the physically handicapped, the elderly, the illiterate and multilingual populations. Pell noted that today's action "would not only continue these vital services but also encourage libraries to expand their activities in two new and important areas: technology and the preservation of their resources"

Noted Pell, "With the rapid development of new information and communications technologies, libraries must be able to acquire and maintain systems that enable them to operate efficient networks for such important services as interlibrary loans."

The added emphasis on preservation will, according to Pell, "encourage greater efforts to protect endangered library materials and to preserve them for future generations."

The legislation approved by the Senate also contains an increased commitment to literacy programs in public libraries. Pell said that this is critical to "reducing the alarming extent of adult illiteracy so prevalent in America."

As passed today by the Senate, the legislation would carry an initial year authorization of just over \$200 million. Pell added that this is a small percentage of all aid to public libraries and that "it reaffirms the federal commitment to supporting these important institutions which must be kept strong, viable and growing."