Library Services Improvement Act (1989)

1989

# Library Services Improvement Act (1989): Memorandum 01

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M E M O R A N D U M

May 15, 1989

TO:      Senator
FROM:    ADC
RE:      Update on Reauthorization of LSCA

Staff meetings on the LSCA reauthorization bill have been proceeding and we are now in the preliminary drafting stages. The House and Senate have been working on this in concert in an effort to introduce identical bills and simplify the conference process. Most of the hassles should be behind us when you do introduce it. We have been responsive to witnesses at our hearing, to RI interests and to the Administration. Our goal has been to keep this a clean reauthorization bill without the special projects that many of your colleagues have waiting in the wings. So far we have been successful in this regard.

The new emphases in LSCA primarily involve increased attention to preservation efforts in public libraries and the ability of libraries to acquire new technology. LSCA has never highlighted preservation so, in line with your general interest in this issue, we have added a section that allows public libraries to use LSCA Title III funds for preservation purposes if they wish to. Some states would apply for preservation monies immediately while others have more pressing priorities elsewhere. Like with the rest of LSCA, states would be allowed to continue to use funds where they have the most pressing need.

Technology has been emphasized in response to testimony received from the library community. Final language has not yet been worked out but the thrust of it will give libraries greater assistance in purchasing and maintaining technological equipment such as computer hardware and communications systems. Montana, for example, simply wants help in providing a single regular telephone to each of its rural libraries. Bruce Daniels, our RI State Librarian, is very supportive of this added emphasis and has been directly involved in negotiations.

We also have reviewed the Administration library proposal and have taken one important section from it that requires the Department of Education to compile research on library use and the impact of LSCA programs. Findings would be reported to Congress and the data would be available to the public. This addresses the serious lack of usable data relating to the public

library field. The bulk of the Administration proposal is simply a sharply reduced LSCA with all construction monies deleted. We are keeping the construction title alive.

The authorization levels are increased by the same increments that have existed for the last five years - each title going up by $5 million for FY 1990 and then "such sums" beyond that for a total of 5 years.  These are modest increases that have general approval and will permit appropriations to advance within reasonable limits.  Title VI (discretionary literacy grants) is doubled from $5 million to 10 million primarily to accomodate Senators Cochran, Simon and Glenn - all of whom have a special interest in literacy issues this year.

It now looks like a final draft will not be ready for introduction until after the coming recess. I met with the Department today to receive their LSCA technical changes which will take a few days to clear with everyone.