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White House Conference on Library and Information Services: Hearings S.J. Res. 26 (April 3, 1987): Correspondence 01

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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND
HUMAN RESOURCES

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

MR. PELL. MR. President, as a result of my direct involvement in the successful 1979 White House Conference on Library and Information Services, I have been actively involved in establishing this second conference which will be held in 1989. It is critical that this bill pass during the current session so that the preliminary conference planning can get underway as soon as possible. It is a large undertaking and much careful effort is required to make it a success.

This early phase is crucial as we look toward the final conference in that it involves library users all across the country in local town hall meetings, in speakouts and in Governors' conferences. These grass roots discussions will focus on the critical issues that currently affect library and information services and frame the agenda for the later meeting.

Libraries across the United States are beleaguered by very serious budgetary problems just at the same time that major technological changes are being made in the way they deliver their services to the public. Costly automated circulation systems and computerized resource networks are being instituted to make libraries more efficient and accessible to future generations who will become increasingly sophisticated in their needs and demands.

It is time now for library users, civic leaders and lawmakers at all levels to join forces in working with librarians and suppliers of library and information service products to fully address the new directions in which libraries are headed. Satellite receivers,, optical discs and microwaves devices will soon become standard elements in the effort to store information, facilitate the delivery of services to users in remote areas and assist those who are precluded from using libraries because of age or handicap.

The cost of this conference has been the subject of some debate. In an effort to keep expenses to a minimum, the bill contains an authorization for \$5 million. This is far below the estimated cost of such a conference but all additional funds will

have to be raised independently. The 1979 conference cost \$3.5 million in federal monies.

This conference will be a significant reaffirmation of our commitment to our libraries. It is important that the process begin and in this regard I ask for the support of my colleagues in approving this legislation.