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Library Services and Construction Act: Joint Hearing (April 11, 1989): Speech 03

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Suggested questions for witnesses at LSCA hearing April 11, 1989

To Administration witnesses:

Why didn't President Bush make the proposed Library Services Improvement Act part of his Education Excellence Act he unveiled last week?

I'm wondering about the Administration's commitment to \$137.2 million in this new proposal. First of all, the Administration has proposed a 1.1 percent cut in all these programs to offset a supplemental funding request for FY 1989. Secondly, the new legislation is not in the top priority category to be funded through economic growth revenues or by cutting something else. Instead, it's in the category which might be cut to fund the President's higher priority new initiatives. What's the story here?

Your proposed legislation would eliminate HEA II library programs. Our focus today is on LSCA, but I would observe that seems a drastic step. As far as I can tell, academic libraries would be limited to the discretionary part of your proposed title II, where they would compete with the rest of the library world for interstate networking grants. What is your rationale for removing a focus on college and research libraries?

You would also remove HEA II-B fellowship assistance. Some of our witnesses today discuss a real shortage of librarians and library faculty. Isn't the fellowship program still needed?

Section 5(a)(5) of LSCA authorizes such sums as necessary for evaluation. Did you request funding to evaluate the current program before developing new legislation to replace LSCA?

You have indicated that most people have access to a public library. What do you mean by access? How adequate is that access?

To public witnesses:

How are school libraries involved in LSCA? Do they benefit?

Do you have any idea how many public libraries provide access to electronic databases?

How many public libraries have microcomputers available for the public? Who uses them and for what purposes?

What is the greatest need in your own library right now?

What has been the impact of LSCA II construction funding in your state?

How about library service in rural areas? Are you reaching everyone? Are telecommunications costs a barrier? Do you use bookmobiles or books-by-mail?

Do you have many latchkey children in your library (or in public libraries in your state)? How do you handle this?

We hear so much about such urban problems as drug abuse, the homeless, and so on. How does this affect public libraries?

DR. KOLB: (Deputy Undersecretary for Planning, Budget and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Education):

Why didn't President Bush make the proposed Library Services and Improvement Act part of his Education Excellence Act that he unveiled last week?

DR. KOLB: Your proposed legislation would eliminate Higher Education Act Title II library programs. Our focus today is on LSCA, but I would observe that this would seem to be a drastic step. As far as I can tell, academic libraries would be limited to the discretionary part of your proposed Title II, where they would compete with the rest of the library world for interstate networking grants. What is your rationale for removing a focus on college and research libraries?

DR. KOLB: Section 5 (a) 5 of LSCA authorizes such sums as may be necessary for evaluation. Did you request funding to evaluate the current program before developing new legislation to replace LSCA?

DR. KOLB: You have indicated that most people now have access to a public library. What do you mean by "access"? And do you consider this "access" to be adequate?

MS. MATTHEWS: (Director of Library Programs, Dept. of Education): As the lead contact in the Department of Education with the library community, what has been the reaction of the state librarians - those individuals who administer LSCA at the state level - of the proposal to replace LSCA with the Library Improvement Act?

MR. SUMMERS (President, ALA): I understand that you, Mr. Summers, were once on the staff of the Providence Public Library. I congratulate you on your current position as President of the ALA.

I want to thank you and the American Library Association for its resolution endorsing the Joint Resolution which I have introduced promoting a national policy on the use of acid-free permanent paper. And I note with pleasure that Congressman Williams has recently introduced the measure in the House. on the Senate side I am happy to report that we now have 29 co-sponsors on this resolution.

As the ALA has stated, about one fourth of the books in research library collections are at risk of being entirely lost because of being printed on acidic paper which has been in general use since about 1850.

From your perspective, what is the situation in regard to "brittle books" in our public libraries (as opposed to research libraries)? Is there a need here which the LSCA might address?

MR. STRONG (State Librarian, Calif): You are from the state with our largest and perhaps the most diverse population of American citizens. Are you aware of any particular communities whose needs are not being met under the current LSCA or whose access is what you would consider inadequate?

MR. STRONG: I am aware of some interest in the possible increase in the basic allotment made to each state under Titles I and III. With the understanding that you are from a large state, can you give us your views of this proposal? And, more specifically, how would you put any additional monies to use.

MR. STRONG or MS. PARKER: What has been the reaction of State Librarians to the replacement of LSCA with the Library Improvement Act?

MS. PARKER (State Librarian, PA): In regard to LSCA Title II (Construction Funds), can you give us a few examples of how these monies were used in Pennsylvania in 1988? How important is this federal assistance in meeting your construction, remodeling or expansion needs? Is the flexibility in how these funds are used important?

MS. PARKER (Pennsylvania State Librarian): Do you have any idea how many public libraries provide access to electronic databases?

MR. BECK (Chair, Mississippi Library Commission and bank president): Perhaps you can give us an estimate of how many people are reached by library services in Mississippi? The Department of Education estimates that 96% of the U.S. population now has access to library services. Do you succeed this well and do you consider the services provided as "adequate"?

MS. ELLIOTT (Director, St. Joseph Public Library, Missouri):
Do you have many latchkey children in your library? What does
your library do to cope with this situation?

MS. THOMPSON (Director, Providence Public Library): What is the
greatest need at The Providence Public Library at the present
time?

Rhode Island has had a history of resource sharing among
various types of libraries. Do you feel there is a need for more
assistance? What has been the role of technology in meeting the
needs of our citizens??

MR. MORRISON (Librarian, Chicago Public Library): We hear a
great deal these days about drug abuse, the homeless and so on.
How do these problems affect public libraries?