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Rep. William Ford (D-MI), House Postsecondary Education Subcommittee Chairman, introduced April 18 H.J.Res.244, calling for a 2nd White House Conference on Library and Information Services no later than 1989. His introductory statement of June 19 is reprinted here. The companion bill, S.J.Res.112, was introduced April 16 by Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-RI). His introductory speech is reprinted on the reverse of this sheet.

**AMERICA'S LIBRARIES IN CRISIS**

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle­man from Michigan (Mr. Ford) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FORD of Michigan. Mr. Speak­er, on April 18, 1985, I introduced legis­lation calling for a White House Con­ference on Library and Information Services (H.J. Res. 244). Because events of the last few months have demonstrated that the need for such a conference is urgent, I would like to take this opportunity to state the case for this legislation. In brief, library service, as we have come to know it in America, is gravely endangered. The ominous cloud above the library is not a spectacular one causing massive public outcry; instead, it is barely visible, gathering momentum almost undetected by the public at large. If not soon recognized, understood, and remedied, the problems besetting the Na­tion's libraries will cause irreparable harm before many people realize what has happened.

This administration's repeated ef­forts to eliminate Federal funding for library programs have been widely re­ported in the media and understood by the general public. We have all heard from our constituents that Federal support for library programs is in the public interest, and we have continued to authorize and appropriate funds for elementary and secondary school li­braries, academic, and public libraries. (Although Federal funds for school li­braries have been consolidated in a block grant, I, for one, intend to mon­itor the effects of the block grant ap­proach on school library service.)

The threat of curtailed Federal funding for school, academic and public library programs is not the only danger facing libraries; indeed, if it were, a White House Conference would not be so urgent. The White House Conference is needed to enable the American public to examine the impact of libraries of many Govern­ment policies, including some which are seemingly tangential to libraries but which in fact may jeopardize American libraries to the core.

For example, as chairman of the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee, I have had an opportunity to learn firsthand how postal policies can affect library service. The mailing of newspapers, magazines, books, and classroom publications has been subsi­dized for many years through the set­ting of special postal rates. The primary pur­pose of the subsidy has been to pro­mote the dissemination of information throughout the Nation by means of the postal system—a tradition that dates back to the 18th century. Since 1904, postal policy has allowed the malling of library materials to the blind and physically handicapped at no cost, again using the postal system to promote the dissemination of inform­ation to those without access. His­torically, the Federal Government, from general tax revenues, has helped certain people pay their postal bills, not as a special favor to them, but in furtherance of the national good. Low rates for small newspapers facilitate the flow of necessary information to all parts of the country, especially rural areas. Subsidized rates for schools, libraries, and suppliers of classroom materials help advance the education of our young people. And low rates for mailings by charitable organ­izations may make some small con­tribution toward helping the truly needy.

This year, however, the President pro­posed that no money be appropri­ated to continue such traditionally preferred postal rates. While libraries are not the chief beneficiary of postal subsi­dies, library service to the public is severely impacted by the proposed termin­ation, because library postage bills would increase dramatically. Nei­ther the libraries themselves, usually not fixed year by year budgets, nor their users, especially the elderly, the handicapped, and those in rural or iso­lated locations who depend on library books-by-mail services, can absorb the massive postal increases. It is a truism that every extra dollar libraries must spend on postage is a dollar less for purchase of library resources and pro­vision of services. Equally obvious is the fact that if libraries are forced to pass on increased costs to their users, libraries will begin to serve only those who can afford to pay for the service. Thus the relationship between postal policy and library service is of crucial importance. In fact, the setting of postal policy can alter drastically the role of the library in our society. The library of today—a publicly sup­ported, institution serving a public service to all—could become an institu­tion charging fees for its services, thus limiting its clientele to the affluent.

Another example of Federal policy promulgation that we need to concern ourselves with is the proposed reduction in the number of depository libraries. This administration has proposed to reduce the number of depository libraries from 200 to 120 by the end of the fiscal year. Library depositories, who maintain a collection of information and its dissemination to the public, while escalating the so-called privatization of Government information. I have reviewed a state­ment on this subject by Francis J. Buck­ley, Jr., of the Detroit Public Li­brary, who cites several instances of the relationship between such privat­ization and curtailed public access to Government information.

For example, the Merit Systems Protec­tion Board ( MSPB) announced in the March 4, 1985, Federal Register that it will no longer publish the full text of its decisions in bound volumes, referring users to four private sector sources instead. The volumes in the past have been provided at no charge to 472 depository libraries across the country, including 37 Federal libraries. In addition, copies were available for purchase through the Government Printing Office at a cost of approxi­mately $55 per year. The private pub­lishers cited offer the decisions in vari­ous formats (bound volumes, loose-leaf services, and microfiche), not all of which include complete texts, at prices ranging from $250 to $498 per year. Few depository libraries or citizens will be able to subscribe to the MSPB decisions at these prices. Thus, discontin­uation of Government publication republication of the United States De­pository Library Program, the Government Printing Office sales program, and in­hibits public access to the information involved.