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The president of the American Library Association, E.J. Josey, of the New York State Library, has stated the issue succinctly:

"Nobody would deny the utility of many of these services provided by the private sector, but they are not available to all of the American people; their purpose is to yield a profit, and they are designed only for those who can pay for them. Nor do they have any obligation to provide access to all or any information; only that information which suppliers deem profitable or potentially so. Only the assistance services, publicly supported, can assure that each individual has equal and ready access to information, whether provision of that information to that individual is economic (i.e., profitable in private sector terms) or not.

The purpose of House Joint Resolution 244 calling for a White House Conference on Library and Information Services in 1989 is simple: to build public awareness of the precarious state of American library service today and to facilitate informed, grassroots, policymaking concerning the future of all types of libraries. Postal policies, Federal information guidelines, Federal funding for libraries, the future of the library as a publicly funded institution providing public service to all—these are vitally important issues affecting all Americans.

And there are other issues affecting libraries that I could mention—the contracting out of Federal libraries as commercial activities, and the increase in library telecommunications costs as a result of access and divestiture related tariffs, for instance. They are not isolated subjects but interrelated issues. Grassroots involvement of the American public, made possible through the White House Conference format, is urgently needed to examine, to protect, and to nurture the many types of libraries throughout the Nation, which together in all their diversity comprise the impressive collections and array of services that make American libraries a national treasure, a storehouse of information freely accessible to all, and the envy of freedom-loving peoples throughout the world.

For this reason, I have sponsored House Joint Resolution 244 calling for a White House Conference on Library and Information Services, and I invite my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring this legislation.