

ALA American Library Association

March 1, 2006

The Honorable Charles H. Taylor
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Room B-308, Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6023

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Room B-308, Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6023

Dear Chairman Taylor and Ranking Member Dicks:

I am writing to convey the deep concerns the American Library Association (ALA) has about the proposed cut of up to \$2 million in the FY 2007 budget of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that could well, if implemented, result in the closure of the EPA Headquarters Library as well as many of its 27 regional and laboratory libraries. These proposed cuts put EPA library collections and services at risk and will seriously harm the public's ability to gain access to the Agency's valuable and unique resources. I urge you to oppose these draconian cuts.

Since its creation in the early 1970s, EPA has been a key source of essential information for the general public, for researchers across the country, and for the Agency's own scientists and staff, from whom the libraries handle more than 134,000 research requests each year. The libraries house unique collections, including an estimated 50,000 one-of-a-kind primary source documents that are available nowhere else.

The EPA's regional libraries serve the public with collections that are specifically tailored to meet the needs of constituents by geographic region—such as mining in Colorado and wetlands in Maryland. If these regional libraries close, as they almost certainly will if the proposed budget cuts are approved, it will become extremely difficult—and in some cases impossible—for constituents and even EPA staff to find reliable information on sensitive environmental issues. The negative impact on public access to government information will be enormous.

ALA has a long-standing commitment to promoting free public access to government information and we are troubled by what seems to be an accelerating trend in increased restrictions on access to government information. Individuals and communities need to be able to find high quality, accurate information about issues that concern them, such as the health and safety of their families and communities. Our members, your constituents, know firsthand how important the EPA library collections and services are to the American public.

We encourage you to maintain the funding necessary to support key government information programs such as the EPA libraries and to ensure adequate future funding for this purpose. At a minimum, I hope you will restore the \$2 million needed for these libraries to continue to operate at the same level in FY 2007.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gorman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "M" and "G".

Michael Gorman
President