



March 2017

Dear Member of Congress:

The Western Council of State Libraries, which represents the state libraries of the 22 states west of the Mississippi, urges you to double, to \$300 million, the grants to states funding that the Institute for Museum and Library Services provides under the Library Services and Technology Act.

As you know, libraries are an essential part of the nation's education system and spur economic growth in numerous ways, improving reading skills being the most obvious. A stronger reader secures a better paying job, reducing the need for government support of that reader and their family. A stronger reader is better able to retool and adapt in the wake of increased workplace automation. A stronger reader is more productive and more collaborative.

The bottom line is that stronger readers improve the bottom line.

Libraries impact the economy in far more ways than improving literacy. They offer tech training, job search opportunities, databases and online educational content, the ability to earn a high school degree online as well as study and creation spaces for learners of all ages and needs.

The lives and earning power of citizens throughout our states are being improved by the work of our libraries.

Smart investors concentrate resources on areas that show the greatest rate of return for the amount invested. Dollars invested in libraries return ten-fold dividends, not just economically but in human capital – as demonstrated by any number of studies we're happy to provide.

At this time, when the structure of our nation's economy is changing so rapidly, we ask you to make the investment in helping America's workforce gain the nimbleness and flexibility they need to succeed. Invest in libraries.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'MaryKay Dahlgreen'.

MaryKay Dahlgreen
President, Western Council of State Libraries
State Librarian of Oregon

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State Librarian of Oregon

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