

October 26, 2006

Honorable Thad Cochran, Chair  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. Senate

Honorable Robert C. Byrd, Ranking Member  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. Senate

Honorable Conrad Burns, Chair  
Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Interior and Related  
Agencies  
U.S. Senate

Honorable Byron Dorgan, Ranking Member  
Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Interior and Related  
Agencies  
U.S. Senate

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to request that you direct the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to restore and maintain public access and onsite library collections and services at EPA's headquarters, regional, laboratory, and specialized program libraries while the Agency solicits and considers public input on its plan to drastically cut its library budget and services. Government representatives, businesses and citizens use information in these libraries to protect public health, enforce environmental laws, and promote sound decision-making. We are concerned that EPA is already dismantling its unique library system without including the public or Members of Congress in the decision-making. Congress should not allow EPA to gut its library system, which plays a critical role in supporting the Agency's mission to protect the environment and public health.

EPA has already eliminated or reduced library service to the public in seven EPA regions covering 31 states and is planning to close its Headquarters' library and maintain it only as a repository. (Attachment) EPA has also closed its pesticide and toxics program library, reducing access to unique materials needed to assess pesticides and other chemicals' potential health effects on children. EPA is implementing these devastating closures on the grounds that they expect to save \$2 million.

EPA's libraries provide far more benefits than the minor cost reductions resulting from their closure. A 2004 EPA report found that "[c]alculated conservatively, the benefit-to-cost ratio for EPA library services ranges between 2:1 and 5.7:1." The report noted that libraries saved EPA professional staff \$7.5 million and non-EPA personnel \$2.8 million, in 2003; and that one-third of the libraries' work gave EPA \$22 million in benefits.

The American Library Association, American Association of Law Libraries, and Special Library Association strongly oppose the cuts, pointing out that EPA has "unique collections, including an estimated 50,000 one-of-a-kind primary source documents that are available nowhere else." Notes provided by the American Library Association that recount a meeting with EPA on the library closures state that their warnings that the Agency should develop a new

system before closing libraries “fell on deaf ears.” Unions representing 10,000 EPA scientists, engineers, and other staff have similar concerns. They note that “[t]he ability of EPA to respond to emergencies will be reduced because important reference materials may be unavailable or take significant time to receive from storage or another library.”

A document from EPA’s Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA) about the library restructuring expresses concern about the Agency’s failure to adequately assess costs and funding needs, maintain critical information, and ensure data accessibility. OECA notes that the libraries have information important to specific regions, states and locales, and unique data on industrial processes and analytical methods. OECA has indicated that it fears that dispersal of this material without proper tracking and access could undercut rulemakings and the ability to “substantiate and support findings, determinations, and guidance.”

We are extremely troubled that EPA is rushing to eliminate or reduce library operations without adequately consulting Congress or the public. We respectfully request that you direct EPA in the FY 2007 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill to restore and maintain public access and onsite library collections and services at EPA’s headquarters, regional, laboratory, and specialized program libraries to the status they held as of January 1, 2006. We also ask that you direct EPA to solicit and consider public and Congressional input, in an open process, prior to making any decision to close a library, cut services, or dramatically restructure the Agency’s library system.

Sincerely,

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Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator

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Frank R. Lautenberg  
United States Senator

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CC: Senator Ted Stevens  
Senator Arlen Specter  
Senator Pete Domenici  
Senator Christopher Bond  
Senator Mitch McConnell  
Senator Richard Shelby  
Senator Judd Gregg  
Senator Robert Bennett  
Senator Larry Craig  
Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson  
Senator Mike DeWine  
Senator Sam Brownback  
Senator Wayne Allard

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Senator Daniel Inouye  
Senator Patrick Leahy  
Senator Tom Harkin  
Senator Barbara Mikulski  
Senator Harry Reid  
Senator Herb Kohl  
Senator Patty Murray  
Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Senator Richard Durbin  
Senator Tim Johnson  
Senator Mary Landrieu

## Attachment

### **Status of EPA Regional Library Closures and Reductions in Service (Specialized Libraries Not Included)**

#### **1. Closed**

- Region 5, which served Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.
- Regions 6, which serves Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Iowa.
- Region 7, which serves Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.

#### **2. Closed to the Public with Reduced Hours to EPA Staff**

- Region 2 Library, which served New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

#### **3. Reduced Access to EPA Staff and the Public**

- EPA Region 1, which serves Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.
- EPA Region 9, which serves Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, the Pacific Islands, and Tribal Nations.
- EPA Region 10, which serves Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Native Tribes.
- EPA Headquarters