

Resolution on Protecting Libraries under the World Trade Organization's
Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

Whereas, the function of libraries is to collect, store, organize, and disseminate information and ideas, and to serve their local communities.

Whereas, GATS is a discipline in which no negotiations have taken place.

Whereas, after the 1999 Seattle WTO Ministerial Conference, the document states, "No services sector or mode of delivery has been negotiated, meaning all service sectors are open to liberalization."

Whereas, the WTO Dispute Settlement Body has already rendered a judgment in "safeguarding the public interest" and "cultural diversity."

Whereas, the GATS defines government services as those supplied in a commercial basis, normally competing with other service providers.

Whereas, libraries could be considered to be operating in competition with other service suppliers by engaging in fee-for-service arrangements with other service providers in the same area of service provision as other service providers.

Whereas, foreign-owned companies providing library services in a particular country are entitled to national treatment, and that multinationals could claim subsidies reserved for libraries and cultural institutions to give similar subsidies (including tax credits) to corporations offering the same services as libraries, thus giving an advantage in order to treat both service providers equally.

Whereas, member countries which are included in the Agreement on Trade in Services negotiate an exemption from GATS disciplines.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City Council of Milwaukee, WI, urges the federal government to negotiate an exemption for libraries from GATS disciplines of the GATT Agreement.

Motion by: Monika Antonelli, Councilwoman, 1st Ward
Seconded: