

Comment

RESOLUTION ON PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF AMERICAN LIBRARIES UNDER THE WTO

WHEREAS, The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) among the Member governments of the World Trade Organization (WTO) addresses all services that are not specifically exempted,

WHEREAS, The GATS excludes government services, provided that these services are neither on a commercial basis nor in competition with other suppliers;

WHEREAS, Interested parties and other WTO Members might argue that some services provided by publicly supported government services are excluded government services;

WHEREAS, A WTO Member may agree to comply with additional obligations under the GATS in a schedule of specific commitments, including national treatment obligations that require a WTO Member to provide foreign services no less favorable treatment than the member provides to like domestic services and suppliers;

WHEREAS, The United States government has provided subsidies to certain sectors on its schedule of commitments and has agreed, with regard to subsidies, generally to comply with GATS national treatment obligations;

WHEREAS, Interested parties and other WTO Members might attempt to argue that the United States should, in accordance with its National Treatment obligations for subsidies, either eliminate government assistance for some services provided by publicly supported and non-profit libraries or provide full market access to library services offered by for-profit entities; and

WHEREAS, The American Library Association wishes to ensure that the United States, under the GATS, neither undermines the ability of publicly supported and non-profit libraries to provide full market access to library services; and

WHEREAS, The United States Trade Representative has advised ALA that his Office does not intend to diminish the role of public libraries in this country and that the government will continue to support libraries' services and the Office will engage in a dialogue with ALA on these issues; and, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the American Library Association shall work with the Office of the United States Trade Representative, and otherwise lobby the federal government as necessary, to ensure that local, state and federal governmental bodies can support the efforts of publicly supported and non-profit libraries to serve the needs of American students and communities for access to information in whatever forms and by whatever means technology may allow in coming years; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Library Association shall work with the Office of the United States Trade Representative, and other appropriate bodies, lobby the federal government as necessary, to ensure that publicly supported and non-profit libraries will be considered "services supplied by the United States" and therefore outside the scope of the GATS; and, to be further

RESOLVED, That the American Library Association will share this resolution with the other national library associations and with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

Initiated by: COL and IPC

Endorsed in principle by: Social Responsibility Round Table

Endorsed in principle by: OITP

Endorsed in principle by: ACRI Copyright Committee

OITP Advisory Committee

Policy: 51.5

Priority: Not