



Government Documents Round Table • American Library Association

Shari Laster  
Chair, ALA GODORT (2017/2018)  
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To the Members of the Congressional Transparency Caucus:

Representative Mike Quigley  
Representative Leonard Lance  
Representative Kevin Yoder  
Representative Tim Ryan  
Senator Patrick Leahy  
Senator John McCain

On behalf of the American Library Association (ALA)'s Government Documents Round Table (GODORT), I am writing to express our gratitude for the Congressional Transparency Caucus's leadership in ensuring the public availability of Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports; and to encourage the Caucus's continued leadership in ensuring these reports are made available in a timely fashion.

The Congressional Research Service, informally known as the "think tank" of Congress, was founded in 1914. But until now, there has been no systematic, comprehensive, official source that provides all Americans equal access to their reports, even though they have been routinely released to the public by Members of Congress, made available through non-profit websites like EveryCRSReport.com and the Federation of American Scientists, and sold by commercial publishers.

Reports from the CRS are well researched and balanced documents, addressing a wide variety of current issues of importance to the American public. As such, the American Library Association—along with many other library- and open government organizations, grassroots efforts, and individual citizens—has long advocated that they be made public and distributed through libraries in the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), administered by the U.S. Government Publishing Office (GPO).

The first bills regarding public online access to CRS reports arose in the 105th Congress (1997-1998): S. 1578 was introduced by Sens. McCain (R-AZ) and Leahy (D-VT) in the Senate, and H.R. 3131 was introduced by Reps. Chris Shays (R-CT) and David Price (D-NC) in the House. Though these efforts were unsuccessful, the determination to make CRS reports public never wavered. With the passage of the 2018 Omnibus Appropriations Act, CRS reports will now be

accessible to the American public. The Library of Congress will begin publishing non-confidential, non-partisan reports on a publicly accessible Congressional website starting in September 2018. Once these reports are fully available, this achievement will positively contribute to the democratic process and inform citizens of the wide variety of issues before Congress.

GODORT would like to sincerely thank you and your staff for over two decades of hard work and dedication to making public access to CRS reports a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shari Laster', written in a cursive style.

Shari Laster  
Chair, Government Documents Round Table

cc

Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden  
CRS Director Mary Mazanec  
Steven Aftergood, American Federation of Scientists  
Daniel Schuman, DemandProgress  
Kevin Kosar, R Street Institute  
Josh Tauberer, GovTrack.US