

Iowa Library Association: 2026 Legislative Priorities

Protect Local Control and Autonomy

Libraries thrive when decisions are made close to home. We urge legislators to:

- **Respect voter intent** by restoring voter-approved levies and ensuring tax dollars remain dedicated to library services.
- **Maintain local governance** by protecting the authority of public library and school boards to set policies that reflect community needs.
- **Support flexible governance models** such as contracting, library districts, and partnerships that sustain services across Iowa.
- **Protect local revenues** by ensuring tax reforms do not weaken school, academic, and library staffing and services.

Ensure Access for All

Every Iowan deserves the freedom to read, learn, and make their own choices in school, public, and academic libraries. We call on legislators to:

- **Uphold the freedom to read** by opposing censorship and legislation that limits Iowans' access to library resources.
- **Affirm parents' rights and responsibilities** to guide their own children's reading without restricting access for others.
- **Support public libraries and K–20 schools** in providing students, faculty, and the public with a wide range of ideas and information to foster learning, curiosity, career readiness, and informed community engagement.

Invest in Statewide Services and Stable Funding

State and federal investment in libraries pays dividends for every Iowan. We support:

- **Certification and continuing education** for school, public, and academic librarians to maintain high professional standards statewide.
- **State Library funding** that sustains training, technology, and resource sharing across all library types, and supports programs like Enrich Iowa, Open Access, and Iowa Shares to ensure books and materials are accessible to students, rural residents, and small communities.
- **Federal IMLS and LSTA funds** which provide critical support for technology, digital equity, and innovation in Iowa's libraries.
- **Stable state and local funding structures**, including protection from tax changes that undermine community services.

Iowa Library Association: Comprehensive Advocacy Platform

The Iowa Library Association (ILA) advocates at local, state, and federal levels for support and programs that ensure Iowa libraries are equipped and resourced to provide essential services to all. By focusing on these priorities, the Iowa Library Association aims to ensure that Iowa libraries remain vital, vibrant, and valued community anchor institutions.

The ILA's legislative vision empowers Iowa libraries to build essential community infrastructure by focusing our efforts on the following areas:

Access to All

Providing all information resources directly or indirectly by the library, in a variety of needful formats or methods, to all library users is a foundational tenet of librarianship. Access to all creates an informed citizenry and directly benefits the quality of life for all in the state.

- **Broadband Development:** ILA will support broadband development funding and program initiatives related to digital inclusion, access, and affordability.
- **State Library Funding and Programs:** ILA will endorse State of Iowa Library funding and programs to provide increased support and training to Iowa libraries related to technology and digital inclusion, as well as statewide initiatives such as Open Access and IowaShares.
- **State Aid to Public Libraries:** ILA will advocate that State Aid funding to Public Libraries be maintained at \$1.1 million or an increased amount.
- **Oversight and Transparency:** ILA will advocate for the continued oversight and transparency provided by the Iowa Governor's Commission of Libraries and for its positions to be filled on a consistent and efficient basis.

Autonomy

Libraries contribute to society by supporting autonomy, a primary value of Iowans essential to living a flourishing life.

- **Legislative Support for Autonomy:** ILA will support legislation that protects the autonomy of libraries and other taxing jurisdictions, ensuring they retain control over voter-approved revenue, including through the reinstatement of levies. For levies being collected but no longer earmarked for libraries, ILA will advocate that those funds be used for their voter-intended purpose.
- **Coalition Building:** ILA will continue to build coalitions with affinity groups, associations, and organizations with similar interests in legislation and funding that support literacy, learning, and librarianship in Iowa.
- **Local Governance:** ILA will advocate to preserve Iowa's tradition of hometown governance for libraries by maintaining support for the autonomy of public library boards and public school boards to develop and apply appropriate policies through

local processes and applicable law.

- **Options in Governance Models:** ILA will support new and existing governance models such as contracting for services, library districts, and other options that retain library services and staff in the face of threats to financial support.

Intellectual Freedom

The Library Bill of Rights, written in Iowa in 1938, has become the national standard for free people reading freely. Let's keep that legacy intact for the next generation by honoring our state motto, "Iowa, Freedom to Flourish."

- **Opposition to Censorship:** ILA will oppose legislative proposals for censorship in any form or infringement of Iowans' freedom to read, view, or learn.
- **Opposition to Criminalization of Librarians and Educators:** ILA will oppose any legislation that criminalizes librarians, teacher librarians, educators, or students performing duties aligned with the core tenets of librarianship.
- **Retention of Iowa Code 728.7:** ILA will support retaining Iowa Code 728.7 in the current form (as of 2025), consistent with federal and state law and the professional ethics of educators and librarians.
- **Guidance on Legislation Impacting Librarians:** ILA will continue to seek and advocate for guidance from the Department of Education, Department of Administrative Services, Board of Regents and other entities regarding the application of any legislation impacting the work of teacher, academic, and public librarians.

Education

Iowa libraries give life to ideas for students and communities who access and enjoy them, enriching themselves and others through lifelong learning.

- **Right to Read and Intellectual Freedom:** ILA will support protections for the right to read, intellectual freedom, academic freedom, and first amendment rights of Iowans in school, public, and academic libraries.
- **Library Funding and E-Resources:** ILA will support library funding and access to affordable e-resources for work and study.
- **Open Educational Resources (OER):** ILA will support State of Iowa Board of Regents funding for grants to develop OER.
- **School Librarians:** ILA will advocate for the designation of school librarians as instructional staff who provide student learning in various educational environments. Appropriate designation of teacher librarians from the Department of Education is crucial.

Community and Economic Development

National studies demonstrate that the Return on Investment (ROI) for libraries is quite high, with every \$1 invested in a library returning \$5 to the local economy.

- **Property Tax and Incentive Legislation:** ILA will monitor property tax legislation, tax abatement, incentive legislation, and any legislation that could impact revenue for libraries.
- **Workforce and Economic Development:** ILA will support funding and programs to provide increased support and training to Iowa libraries related to workforce and

economic development initiatives.

- **Federal funding for Libraries:** ILA will continue to work with other state library associations and the American Library Association to retain federal funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), focusing on the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), which provides funding for state-level grants.
- **Broadband Development:** ILA will support broadband development funding and programs for initiatives where libraries can play a key role in program development and implementation, such as telehealth and workforce training.
- **Consumer Rights for Digital Content:** ILA will support patrons' consumer rights for fair access and pricing for digital content to libraries.
- **Community Partnerships:** ILA will advocate for policies that recognize and support the role of libraries as essential community partners—providing meeting spaces, services, and resources that help local organizations deliver programs, offset expenses, and strengthen community infrastructure.