

From: [Greg Mandel](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: HB72 -- financing for Online With Libraries (OWL)
Date: Monday, March 30, 2015 9:16:01 AM

Dear Senate Finance Committee Members: Mr. Kelly, Ms. MacKinnon, Mr. Micciche, Mr. Bishop, Mr. Dunleavy, Mr. Hoffman, Mr. Olson,

My name is Greg Mandel, and I'm the Electronic Outreach Librarian at Kettleson Memorial Public Library in Sitka. I'd like to take a moment of your time to tell you how important the Alaska OWL program is to our community.

The Alaska OWL program assists our library in offering public access to the Internet. A lot of our citizens here can't afford home computers, or home internet access. They depend on the library to connect to the outside world via the Internet, and the Alaska OWL program gives us bandwidth support that would cost us an additional \$300-400 a month for our public access computers without the assistance of the OWL program.

In addition, the Alaska OWL program connects our patrons and the citizens of Sitka to the rest of the state through a whole host of videoconferencing programs. The OWL network offers programs on everything from health and safety, to panel discussions on important social issues and pending legislation. The network allows citizens from our community to have a voice to express their concerns about these important issues, and gives them the opportunity to connect with other Alaskans from all around the state to discuss these important matters that affect their lives. The citizens of our community use the OWL network to learn, and to connect to educational programs that improve and enrich their daily lives in a way that they will not be able to do without the OWL network.

I realize you've got a lot of numbers at your disposal, a lot of facts and figures. But I'd like to put a human face on what the OWL program offers to communities like Sitka, in Southeast Alaska, that are isolated and depend on internet connectivity to the outside world. A while back, a local woman here was providing foster care for a young child who was diagnosed with childhood diabetes. She needed information on how to care for the child, just day-to-day issues like how to treat her child and what to feed her child, and she was able – through our OWL connection at the library – to connect with doctors in Anchorage who, for two full days taught her how to treat and feed her child. And without the library's OWL connection, she would not have been able to make that connection.

Please restore full funding for this vital program.

Thank you,

Greg Mandel

Electronic Outreach Librarian

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