

**From:** [Karen K](#)  
**To:** [Senate Finance Committee](#)  
**Cc:** [Sen. Lyman Hoffman](#)  
**Subject:** OWL Funding  
**Date:** Monday, March 07, 2016 9:45:34 AM

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Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Karen Kresh, and I am the Librarian at the Unalaska Public Library. I am writing you today about why funding for the OWL project, or Online with Libraries, is important to our community. Funding from the OWL program has allowed the library to offer high-speed internet. On our remote Aleutian island, internet is expensive and tightly capped. In fact, home internet is so costly and unreliable that many residents do not have it, and the library gives them a connection to the outside world.

Our library shares an internet connection with the school to save money and maximize bandwidth. Without OWL funding, our internet connection will be much slower and more expensive, and the school will also suffer from decreased bandwidth. OWL also allows us to leverage federal e-rate funds, which cover nearly \$80,000 per year in our community alone. Without OWL, the school and library could lose much of this federal funding. If we establish a fee structure for internet access, as the legislature has suggested, we will no longer be eligible for these federal funds.

Through our library's internet connection, middle school students in our remote community were recently able to take a virtual tour of the UAF campus. Through videoconferencing, a group of elementary students was able to tour the NASA Space Capsule in Houston. A father uses our library's internet connection to read books to his young kids, who live off-island, via Skype.

This program is essential to Unalaska and other remote Alaskan communities. It keeps us connected to the rest of the state, the country, and the world, and it gives us access to federal e-rate funds. I realize that this is a difficult time for the state, and these are tough decisions, but eliminating OWL will be a huge step backwards for rural Alaska.

Thank you for this opportunity for public input.

Sincerely,

Karen Kresh