

From: [Mary Jo Joiner](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: OWL Funding
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My name is Mary Jo Joiner and I am a member of the Board of the Alaska Library Association.

I realize that this year there is a substantial strain on financial resources, but the OWL program which was in the governor's budget and has been cut should be restored.

Recently, I received a phone call from an angry community member. He railed about the fact that there were no IRS forms at the post office and very few available at the library. He was irate. I tried to explain that we are at the mercy of the IRS and they have drastically cut costs by not printing many forms and that those forms are available online. He did not have the ability to access and print forms at home.

If you expect Alaskans to apply for their PFDs online, to access any of your webpages or like you on Facebook, to send you email or even to apply for jobs, they must have internet access that allows them to do this. As more forms and government information are only available electronically we see people coming to the library for access and assistance.

The OWL program supports internet costs for the smallest rural Alaskan public libraries. Without internet access in our public libraries many Alaskans simply don't have access to and/or cannot afford broadband at a speed that allows them to do these things. The internet subsidy in the OWL budget of \$262,000 leverages more than \$1 million dollars in E-rate funds.

Without sufficient broadband speeds the OWL network cannot provide the videoconferencing capability that is in place today. For many communities this equipment will no longer be able to fulfill the function that it was intended for.

Where previously people would travel for training, continuing education or conferences, OWL provides an alternative to that travel. With OWL we can share cultural programming, lectures and courses. It allows desktop videoconferencing from home/office or business. In 2015, there were 532 interactive videoconferences using the network.

Please continue to support these programs for all Alaskans.