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From: Debra Waldorf [mailto:dwaldorf@ci.homer.ak.us]
Sent: Tuesday, March 08, 2016 11:06 AM
To: Sen. Anna MacKinnon <Sen.Anna.MacKinnon@akleg.gov>
Subject: Alaska OWL Funding

Dear Senator MacKinnon,
OWL, an important program that funds broadband internet used by 43 public libraries for their patrons and numerous agencies, was included in the Governor's budget, but cut from the House Finance Committee's budget and the Senate Finance Committee. I know you understand the importance of this program to many people statewide, particularly rural Alaskans, but did you know this program brings in a 4-1 match of federal e-rate funding dollars? If OWL is left unfunded, those federal dollars are left on the table.

OWL funding is small but immense in its range and scope. Please support this portion of the Governor's request and keep OWL available to those 43 public libraries. If cut, these libraries will not be able to absorb the high cost of broadband internet access. Libraries will be in the difficult position of having to raise funds to cover this cost, virtually impossible for all of these libraries. if libraries begin to charge for internet access, those already underserved members of our communities, many of whom are using library resources, will not be able to afford this cost, either. It's hard to believe but there are many folks across Alaska who have no means for this cost, thus rendering them unable to participate in the 21st century except through their public library. No way to apply for jobs, beef up skills, apply for government assistance, etc.

Please restore OWL funding. It'll make an immense difference to many people statewide.

Sincerely,
Debra J. Waldorf
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