

**From:** [Sen. Anna MacKinnon](#)  
**To:** [Senate Finance Committee](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Please fund OWL!  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 08, 2016 2:13:41 PM

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*Kristen Pratt*

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**From:** Toby Widdicombe [mailto:twiddicombe@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 08, 2016 12:57 PM  
**To:** Sen. Pete Kelly <Sen.Pete.Kelly@akleg.gov>; Sen. Anna MacKinnon <Sen.Anna.MacKinnon@akleg.gov>; Sen. Peter Micciche <Sen.Peter.Micciche@akleg.gov>; Sen. Click Bishop <Sen.Click.Bishop@akleg.gov>; Sen. Mike Dunleavy <Sen.Mike.Dunleavy@akleg.gov>; Sen. Lyman Hoffman <Sen.Lyman.Hoffman@akleg.gov>; Sen. Donny Olson <Sen.Donny.Olson@akleg.gov>  
**Subject:** Please fund OWL!

Please restore funding for OWL.

OWL is a vital program that funds broadband internet used by 43 public libraries for their patrons and numerous agencies. It 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. You may, however, not know that 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. To leave them there is fiscally unsound.

OWL funding is small but immense in its range and scope. If the funding is 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. Doing so is nearly impossible for them. 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. It's hard to believe but there are many folks across Alaska who have no means to pay for internet access. Without help, they will be 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. No way to be good citizens.

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

Toby Widdicombe

