

From: [Aldean Kilbourn](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: testimony on state budget
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I am not currently where I can come testify, so I am writing this instead.

I am very concerned to hear that the Senate Finance Committee has recommended elimination of Alaska OWL (Online With Libraries) and Live Homework Help from the State Library's budget.

Basically what you are saying when you eliminate these items is that you are not interested in those in the state who don't have access to good broadband width to access the Internet. As a legislator, you have a responsibility to represent your constituents locally, but also the state as a whole. It is reprehensible for you to cast off those who don't live in cities like Anchorage, Fairbanks, & Juneau, where there is a tax base and good access to wide broadband. Three quarters of the public libraries in Alaska can't afford the bill to have good broadband in their communities. Many of these library patrons do not have Internet service at home and depend solely on the library for technical resources. Technology is so important in these communities where there is no cell phone service and communication is dependent on landlines. Think about this when you decide what to do: 2013 figures show the mean download speed for Alaska libraries was 5.8 Mbps while the national mean download speed was 57.4 Mbps. Current state funds leverage about \$2 million in federal E-Rate funds for broadband to Alaska public libraries in 2014.

We all recognize that budget cuts are going to have to come, but your job is to see that ways to bring all Alaskans together are supported and funded.

In 2014, Homework Help funding provided tutoring sessions to 29,279 Alaskans. I recommend Homework Help to all of my friends with children, and without exception, they have commented back what a big help it was since they couldn't provide their children with how to answer their questions. I challenge each of you to go sign up and try Homework help - it is a very positive experience. To go from a mere 5073 tutoring experiences in 2008 to the almost 30,000 tutoring experiences in 2014 says the program works. Something you also don't seem to know is that after every tutoring session there is a survey that wants to know how well the tutoring served a patron. These are the responses:

98% Helps them complete homework

96% More confident about their studies

96% Helps improve their grades

98% Would recommend to a friend

Gov. Walker's FY2016 budget includes \$719,800 for Online With Libraries (OWL). Many local libraries in smaller and remote communities are located within the school and OWL offers much needed additional resources to students. When you can provide for both educational needs and community needs of Internet bandwidth, you're using the same dollars twice, an economically smart move. Even if a public library could afford the high cost of Internet bandwidth necessary to do video conferencing, then there's no money for tech help or equipment to get the conferencing going. The state's funding means that OWL can provide for a connection to the bigger population centers with those smaller, Bush communities.

As you work on the FY2016 Budget bill, please keep funding for OWL, Homework Help and the additional early childhood literacy initiatives within the State Library's budget.

Sincerely,

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Freedom is not a passive perk.