

**From:** [Patricia Brown](#)  
**To:** [Senate Finance Committee](#)  
**Subject:** Reconsideration of OWL funding  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 31, 2015 11:29:39 AM

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Dear Finance Committee members:

I am writing to request your reconsideration of funding for the Alaska Online with Libraries (OWL) project. OWL provides broadband subsidies for Alaska's small and remote public libraries, a videoconferencing network for all Alaskans, and Internet technology assistance to Alaska public libraries. Because of the prohibitive costs of internet access in remote areas, libraries are often the only provider of free internet access to their communities. The money spent on OWL is leveraged into roughly \$2 million in federal E-rate funds with which 67 communities are brought up to the minimum speed to qualify as broadband.

Without OWL, Alaskan libraries will lose:

- Affordable and high speed Internet connections necessary for 21<sup>st</sup> century tasks and competencies.
- Videoconferencing capabilities which has allowed for student participation in classes not available in their own communities, local Board trainings, personal legal advice, healthcare advocacy, and shared programs and trainings between libraries.
- Access to information and resources and online library catalogs available only through consistent and high speed internet connections.

Since connecting with OWL, public internet use in Haines has risen by 54%. We've participated in 84 videoconference programs with a total local attendance of over 400 and we've had several students at the high school, college, and graduate school level able to participate in classes or complete course work that would have been impossible prior to OWL. **The total value for our community's use is calculated at \$461,460 per year.**

Continuing State support of the OWL project will benefit us all, allowing us to remain in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of Internet connectivity, making us competitive in our digital competencies with other states in the nation.

Thank you for your consideration of funding Alaska OWL.

Sincerely,

**Patricia Brown**

Director, Haines Borough Public Library

President, Alaska Library Association

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