

YALSA Members & Concerned Library Workers,

There's one week left to contact your Senator about the importance of social networking technologies in libraries. If you haven't already, please take a minute to get in touch with your Senator. Some useful resources and information are provided below. Also, YALSA has created and compiled three great resources for librarians, which are all available at www.ala.org/yalsa. Click on the links for the: Legislative Advocacy Guide, DOPA Information Packet and Teens & Social Networking in School & Public Libraries Toolkit.

1. Contact your Senator by Sept. 5th to:

- a. Educate him/her about the positive uses of Social Networking Sites (use the information in YALSA's Toolkit on Teens & Social Networking in School & Public Libraries).
- b. Tell him/her your opinion of legislation like DOPA that would unfairly restrict access to critical online communication tools. (see YALSA's Legislative Advocacy Guide for quick tips on contacting your Senator).

To find out who our Senator is and email him/her, go to www.ala.org and click on "Take Action Now," then click on "Contact Your Legislator."

When you get to the next page, type in your zipcode to find out who your Senator is and/or to send him/her an email.

2. **Personalize and send the accompanying sample letter to the editor of your local newspaper**, and encourage your library patrons to do the same.
3. **Sign the online petition opposing legislation limiting access to social networking technologies** at www.saveyourspace.org.
4. **Host an information session at your library about social networking sites** (see YALSA's Toolkit on Teens & Social Networking in School & Public Libraries for tips and ideas).
5. **Tell YALSA how you're using social networking technologies at your library.**
 - a. Go to <http://teentechweek.wikispaces.com> and click on "Online Social Networking." From there you can add a link to your library's MySpace space as well as join in on the discussion about how you're using social networking technologies in your library.
6. **Invite your Senator to your library** while they're home from DC between August 7th and September 4th.

- a. Have teens on hand to demonstrate productive ways they use social networking technologies
- b. Provide the Senator with a photo-op (e.g. giving a summer reading award to a teen or reading a story to kids)
- c. Give the Senator information about social networking sites and show him/her what your library is already doing to keep children and teens safe online.

Sample letter to the editor

(please feel free to make additions or changes so that it better fits any particular messages you want to get across)

Librarians care deeply about children and teens and are concerned about their safety online and in our community. While Congress' effort to make children and teens more safe online is admirable, the Deleting Online Predators Act (DOPA) will actually do little to make our kids safer. What it will do is block access to critical Internet resources and communication tools in schools and libraries that our kids need to learn how to use in order to be successful in college and the workplace. It also takes control away from communities like ours, and leaves the decision making about what our children can access on the Internet to the politicians in Washington DC.

DOPA will further limit kids' access to online resources at school and in libraries. That means it would prevent librarians and teachers from instructing students and their parents about how to use all kinds of Web applications safely and effectively. Because it is linked to federal funding, DOPA also hurts most those kids served by schools and libraries in low-income communities.

DOPA restricts online support groups, email programs through which family members can communicate with each other, and educational tools used to provide distance education, squashing kids' first attempts at becoming acquainted with applications that will soon be essential workplace tools. Just one example of what has been lost in a rush to legislate is a recent online field trip to Carlsbad Caverns in N.M., in which more than 10 million students participated and First Lady Laura Bush took part.

Perhaps the most troubling part of DOPA is the false sense of security it gives parents who are seeking solutions to the problem of online predators. Like dangers to kids in the real world, dangers on the Internet are not easily overcome. Teaching young people to practice safe behaviors and guard their privacy online the same way they would in public is critical if we want to protect them.

Please join me in urging Congress to make a real commitment to kids' safety by abandoning bad legislation like DOPA and funding our libraries and schools

adequately so they have the resources they need to empower our community's kids to stay safe on the Internet.

Sincerely,
[add your name here]