The Idaho Library Association (ILA) has been in discussions with two legislators and members of legislative leadership about a draft bill that would require public libraries to have Internet use policies and to filter all computers accessible to the public. The legislators were requested by “Citizens for Decency” to carry this legislation as follow-up to a bill passed last year that requires schools to filter Internet access.

The public library draft is more restrictive than the school legislation since it states that “Public moneys shall not be provided to any public library” that does not have a policy to filter any publicly accessible computer. The school statute addresses only state funding which, of course, Idaho public libraries don’t receive.

ILA is on record as opposing the draft as written for reasons that include the following:

- These policy issues should be managed at the local level. Public libraries are governed by locally elected officials who are responsible for setting policies that reflect the local community values, standards, and information needs.
- The process and authority by which a non-compliant public library would “not be provided” their local tax revenue is unknown and is not addressed in the draft.
- A state statute setting out an Internet filtering policy for local public libraries is unnecessary. As referenced in the draft bill, Idaho Code 18-1513 through 18-1515 addresses obscene materials and the protection of minors; these statutes are already applicable to all public libraries.
- Public libraries serve a mixed population of adults and children, and should not be subject to more restrictive Internet policies than schools.
- According to the 2009 statistics, more than 88% of the operating revenue of Idaho public libraries comes from local sources, primarily property taxes. Under this proposal, in all practicality a public library could not legally open its doors, let alone provide service, programs, and resources, if it chose not to comply with the state mandate to filter its Internet access.

From The Board of Library Commissioners Handbook, Statute, Rules, Policies and Guidelines:

“The Commission for Libraries and its Board of Library Commissioners affirm intellectual freedom as a core value of the agency and of libraries, and therefore support the American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights and its Freedom to Read Statement.”