

IV. LEGISLATION – POLICIES – RULES – GUIDELINES

B.1 Policies – ALA Intellectual Freedom – Information Item

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The Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association

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The American Library Association (ALA) has as one of its officially stated goals that it is the leading advocate for the public's right to a free and open information society (Policy A.1.3). ALA opposes any use of governmental power to suppress the free and open exchange of knowledge and information (Policy B.8.5.1). Indeed, the principle of intellectual freedom – unfettered access to knowledge – is a core belief of our profession, as captured in the [Library Bill of Rights](#).

Amidst [reports](#) of the Trump administration's attempts to order media blackouts of federal agencies, it's important that we resist any attempt to use the power of government to stifle the very agencies charged, like libraries, with the dissemination of information.

To take just one prominent example, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) not only dedicates itself to the mission to protect human health and the environment, but also to ensure that "all parts of society — communities, individuals, businesses, and state, local and tribal governments — have access to accurate information sufficient to effectively participate in managing human health and environmental risks."

In his Jan. 20, 2017 inaugural address, President Trump said, "We are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People." On the second day of his administration, however, Doug Ericksen, the head of communications for the Trump administration's EPA transition team, gave a very different message during an [NPR interview](#): Scientists at the EPA who want to publish or present their scientific findings will apparently need to have their work reviewed before it can be disseminated. He doesn't mean "by other scientists."

"We'll take a look at what's happening so that the voice coming from the EPA is one that's going to reflect the new administration," Ericksen said.

The EPA's [Scientific Integrity Policy](#) states, "Science is the backbone of the EPA's decision-making. The Agency's ability to pursue its mission to protect human health and the environment depends upon the integrity of the science on which it relies." Moreover, the policy seeks to ensure that "the Agency's scientific work is of the highest quality, free from political interference or personal motivations."

To restrict citizens' access to information essential to their health because it fails to agree with the political viewpoint of a particular administration is blatant government censorship. Rather than returning power to the American people, such strategies endanger us.

The Office for Intellectual Freedom strongly condemns this heavy-handed attempt to silence the scientific community. The people pay for the EPA, and are entitled to hear from it, unfiltered by the biases of the current administration.

<http://www.oif.ala.org/oif/?p=8410>

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