

**Missoula County Commissioners**

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BCC 2023-140  
July 20, 2023

Montana State Library Commission  
1201 11th Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Members of the Montana State Library Commission:

We are writing to express our deep disappointment with the Montana State Library Commission's recent decision to leave the American Library Association. The ALA provides libraries across the country with resources that improve public access to information, foster literacy and promote lifelong learning.

The decision to withdraw from the ALA means librarians and other staff at the state library will be left without these important tools that help them serve libraries and residents across Montana. Withdrawing membership also means the library will not have access to the ALA's advocacy work that helps secure funding on a national level. Undoubtedly, it's the smaller, rural and tribal libraries that will suffer most without this important network.

One of the hallmarks of public libraries is to serve as a venue for learning from the lived experiences of others and participating in robust discussion of ideas and beliefs that may differ from our own. It's particularly concerning that the board would vote to leave the ALA based on the political beliefs of its newly elected president. Additionally, the vitriolic comments from the public and some board members that surfaced around this decision will cause further harm to Montanans who are already part of marginalized communities.

We hope you will reconsider this decision and whether it truly reflects the mission of the Montana State Library.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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Josh Slotnick, Chair

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David Strohmaier, Commissioner

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Juanita Vero, Commissioner

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