

INTERSTATE COMPACTS FOR LIBRARY SERVICE

MR. FOGARTY.

Mr. Speaker, I have today introduced a bill which would grant the consent of Congress to interstate agreements for the purpose of developing or operating library facilities and services.

Libraries, like all other governmental agencies, are searching for ways to provide service effectively and economically for all people regardless of where they live. While State, county, town and municipal library systems are serving a large segment of the nation, population expansion and shifts within recent years have created new groupings, bound by economic, topographic and social considerations, but separated politically by the intrusion of State lines. Like transportation and other public services, most efficient library operations in many cases would follow these natural patterns rather than those of the more artificial political boundary lines. Interstate planning is the next step which should be taken in many localities. It appears timely, therefore, that Congress give consent in advance so that progress may be encouraged and it is for this purpose that I have introduced the bill.

Article I, Sec. 10 of the Constitution of the United States has apparently been a deterrent to states joining in projects for mutual benefit yet it appears that educational and library service projects cannot in any way be a "clear and present danger to the sovereignty of the United States"; in any way affect the powers delegated to the national government; or, affect the political balance within the federal system. However, some attorneys general have ruled otherwise, and many states appear to be reluctant to pass legislation which will permit joint action on library matters.

There are two distinct areas where library service might be improved through interstate agreements - one is the great metropolitan district, and the other sparsely settled rural areas where boundaries hinder development of an area large enough to provide modern library services.

Of the 25 largest metropolitan districts 12 are on state borders. The large metropolitan library, chiefly supported by local taxation, is faced with demands for service from the entire area. Developing library service programs for the entire area could be best undertaken by the large metropolitan library and would result in a well coordinated and strengthened service for the entire district but a compact of some type would appear to be necessary.

The general statute, N. Y. General Municipal Law, Sect. 460-473 (supp.) Interlocal agreements with governmental units of other states, in its statement of purpose clearly defines the problem for both rural and urban areas:

"to permit local governmental units to make the most efficient use of their powers by enabling them to cooperate with governmental units of other states on a basis of mutual advantage and thereby to provide services and facilities in a manner that will accord best with geographic, economic, population and other factors influencing the needs and development of local communities."

Since the great change in transportation, and especially since the automobile has become a regular means of private transportation, populations have shifted to a point where the self-contained local village hardly exists. Shopping centers have made great changes in our way of life, as has the development of industrial centers centralized and decentralized.

We have discovered that a village library cannot provide all the information and books its residents need and desire. Television and other media are arousing interest in many subjects and problems our one-time small townner was willing to let others be informed about. Now it is necessary for the library to have greater resources than local taxes could ever provide. The centralized reference service at the State Library and the bookmobiles which move from town to town leaving collections of current books of interest to all ages and groups are permitting our towns to provide the needed broader library services.

Since state boundaries are artificial at best and frequently ignore topographical limits, as well as population distribution and economic developments, it seems appropriate that every opportunity taken be given for successfully bridging these boundaries.

There are many library services which are possible on an interstate basis. Those of the large metropolitan district may be somewhat different but many of our smaller cities might effectively expand service to more rural areas in neighboring states.

A group of small libraries on a state border could jointly employ a cataloger, pool their book funds and buy and catalog their books not only with a saving of money, but with an improvement in the quality of the cataloging.

Every library of any size particularly if it is a reference library has a stock of books and journals which should be preserved but which are seldom used. In small states such as ours a depository could be established by several states for these seldom used materials and operated for the benefit of all. This would release valuable shelf space and permit disposal of all but one copy or set of these resources.

There will be many problems for individual states to work out ranging from methods by which state aid is to be applied to a service jointly operated at the local level, the selection of governing boards for these agencies and tax support. But if we have cleared the way by achieving the consent of Congress, then we can tackle the purely local problems.