Connecticut Library Association
USA PATRIOT Act Resolution

In February 2003, the Connecticut Library Association Executive Board approved the following resolution regarding Public Law 107-56, particularly but not limited to Section 215 of the **U**niting and **S**trengthening **A**merica by **P**roviding **A**ppropriate **T**ools **R**equired to **I**ntercept and **O**bstruct **T**errorism Act (USA PATRIOT). Hastily passed with no public hearing and signed by President George W. Bush on Oct. 26, 2001, the law has significant implications for libraries. Intended to expand the government's ability to prevent and fight terrorism, it includes provisions that threaten the privacy rights of library users, undermine the confidentiality that supports the free exchange of ideas so critical for democracy and significantly challenge the constitutional premise that you are innocent until proven guilty.

The Connecticut Library Association supports this resolution on the USA PATRIOT Act and related measures that infringe on the rights of library patrons.

WHEREAS, the professional ethic of librarianship is to facilitate the free flow of information, to facilitate its distribution and to protect the privacy of those who seek information; and

WHEREAS, the privacy and confidentiality of those who seek and use recorded knowledge and information are of the highest importance; and

WHEREAS, the provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act, Homeland Security Act and current and future laws and regulations expand the authority of the federal government to detain and investigate citizens and non-citizens, to engage in electronic surveillance of citizens and non-citizens, and to threaten civil rights and liberties guaranteed under the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights; and

WHEREAS, the USA PATRIOT Act, Homeland Security Act and current and future laws and regulations increase the likelihood that activities and records of library patrons, including their tangible and intangible records, their use of computers to browse the Web or access email, may be under government surveillance without their knowledge or consent; and

WHEREAS, the new federal laws and policies disproportionately affect individuals who rely on public access computers in libraries;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Connecticut Library Association opposes use of government power to suppress the free and open exchange of ideas and information; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Connecticut Library Association encourages all librarians, library administrators, and library advocates to inform their communities, staff and patrons about the far-reaching danger of current legislation, including the USA PATRIOT Act, Homeland Security Act and future legislation that impinges on patron confidentiality and access to information; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Connecticut Library Association strongly condemns any current or future legislation, or any government action that threatens privacy, information access and Constitutional rights, both Federal and State; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Connecticut Library Association affirms that if any sections of the USA PATRIOT Act and Homeland Security Act violate fundamental rights and liberties guaranteed in the United States Constitution, Bill of Rights and Connecticut Constitution, they should be repealed; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Connecticut Library Association, although it opposes terrorism, has a long and distinguished history of defending intellectual and civil liberties, and will affirm and uphold the efforts of librarians everywhere to defend and support patron privacy and free and open access to information.

Endorsed by the Connecticut Library Association's Executive Board (2/03)

Endorsed by the Norwalk Public Library Board of Directors (6/03)