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Governmental Affairs Office

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Dear Representative:

On behalf of the American Bar Association, I write to urge your support of H.R. 2728, the William Orton Law Library Improvement and Modernization Act (Orton Act) when presented for your consideration on the House Floor. We believe that this important legislation provides a critical response to resource challenges facing the Law Library of Congress, as well as innovative solutions such as fostering a private-public partnership to ensure the vitality of the Law Library and its collection into the future.

Since its original authorization in 1832, the Law Library of Congress has grown to become an unrivalled legal resource to the Congress, commerce, academia, the legal profession, and to the public. It has also become an indispensable resource for supporting the rule of law worldwide.

Over time, the demands on Law Library services have outpaced congressional funding available to it through the annual Library of Congress appropriation. The Library of Congress has had to engage in the unenviable task of spreading funding shortfalls among an array of collections and projects, each of which has its particular need. It then must make difficult decisions over how to direct scarce resources toward the few, most critical needs. This balancing act has meant that at times portions of the Law Library collection, such as its loose-leaf subscriptions, have been months out of date. The Library has made a commitment over time to use leftover funds at year's end to assist with a direly needed cataloguing and classification, yet hundreds of thousands of volumes yet remain out of reach. This is an unfortunate pace of progress for such a national treasure as the Law Library.

The Orton Act will authorize a much-needed \$3.5 million to bring the collection current and according to the Law Library's exacting standards. By the creation of a line-item in the federal budget within the Library of Congress, the Law Library will have greater autonomy and accountability in raising awareness and funding as a contributing member of the Library of Congress system, while promoting a greater accountability of the Congress toward its financial commitment to the state of the Law Library. The increased autonomy and transparency will further facilitate the third aspect of the Orton Act, the authorization of a private-public partnership, the William Orton Program in which the private sector will play a more direct role in the support and services of the Law Library.

By supporting this legislation, you will translate into concrete, measurable action the vision of the Congress in creating the Law Library of Congress and the mission with which it is charged. Consistent with this, adoption of the Orton Act will recognize officially the Law Library of

Congress as also the National Law Library, the institution available and owned by the American people it has historically so dutifully served.

The American Bar Association also expresses its deep appreciation to the sponsors of this legislation, Rep. Zoe Lofgren and Rep. Daniel Lungren, for the renaming of this legislation from the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress to honor the late William Orton. Mr. Orton was taken from us far too early, but not before dedicating his life to selfless service on behalf of his family, his church, and the people of the Third District of the State of Utah from 1991-1997. He later served 12 years on the ABA Standing Committee on the Law Library of Congress, in tireless dedication to the Law Library of Congress, and lived to see this legislation introduced in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

On behalf of the American Bar Association, I thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Thomas M. Susman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Thomas M. Susman  
Director