Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 19, 2016

The Honorable David S. Mao
Acting Librarian of Congress
The Library of Congress
101 Independence Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20540

Dear Mr. Mao:

The Library of Congress, as the preeminent collection of books, recordings, photographs, and manuscripts in America and the largest library in the world, provides scholars of all disciplines access to research services. In order to effectively and efficiently navigate such an enormous wealth of material, researchers must often use subject headings to search the catalog of records at the Library and other institutions across the country. So we were surprised and disappointed to learn of the Library's decision to eliminate the terms "aliens" and "illegal aliens" from subject heading and search classifications.

The impact of this misguided decision will be substantial and widespread. The Library's own materials expressly state that the heading "aliens" is over 100 years old—indeed, it is one of the oldest headings used by the Library of Congress. And for good reason. The term "aliens" can be found in countless historical materials of enormous significance. William Blackstone, to give just one example, describes in his iconic common-law treatise *Commentaries on the Laws of England* the difference between "*aliens* and natural-born subjects." As you are also probably aware, Title 8 of the United States Code and the Immigration and Nationality Act extensively use these now-forbidden terms, as do numerous government agencies and those who access their services. Scholars of immigration, sociology, and other related disciplines will now face increased research barriers, as will jurists seeking to access your historical materials in order to understand the historical landscape of immigration law.

The Library candidly acknowledges the burden this internal restructuring will cause at its numerous facilities and the thousands of libraries nationwide that rely on its resources. And it concedes that while it regularly reviews requests to alter existing terms, revisions are rare, and even rarer for terms of legal and historical significance—*i.e.,* exactly the terms at issue here. Yet, it continues on this Orwellian trajectory, even though its Policy and Standards Division has apparently rejected similar requests for revisions in recent years.

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There is no other way to put this: the Library has bowed to the political pressure of the moment. Such an action is beneath the dignity of the Library of Congress. Rather than engage in revisionist history, the Library should base its decisions on sound judgment, taking actual history, present facts, and future research efforts into account.

Although we respect the Library's independence to make decisions involving routine operations, Congress is fundamentally an oversight body, and we strongly object to the Library's elimination of terms that Congress has exercised its authority to use and deploy in the United States Code. These are statutory legal terms of art, not throwaway words to be arbitrarily erased. If individuals or organizations want to revise terms in current law, they should petition Congress to consider appropriate legislation.

We respectfully urge the Library of Congress immediately to revoke these subject heading cancellations.

Thank you for your attention to our request. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Lamar Smith
Member of Congress

Jeff Sessions
United States Senator

John A. Culberson
Member of Congress

Ted Cruz
United States Senator