

DATE: May 29, 2026
TO: RAILS Universal Service Committee
FROM: Joe Filapek, Associate Executive Director
SUBJECT: Advocacy and Legislative Options for the Unserved

This agenda item is to encourage forward-looking discussion and brainstorming regarding advocacy and legislative opportunities related to the unserved. As part of the committee's ongoing charge around universal service, this discussion is designed to help identify potential priorities for Fiscal Year 2027 and beyond, particularly in areas where coordinated advocacy or policy development may advance library access.

Additionally, the committee may wish to consider whether any concepts emerging from this discussion could be developed into a formal proposal for submission to the Illinois Library Association (ILA) Public Policy Committee, with proposals due in August.

Looking Ahead to FY 2027 Priorities

As the committee looks ahead, we might consider where advocacy efforts may have the greatest impact in addressing persistent gaps in library service. Key areas of focus may include:

- Strategies to support residents in unserved areas of the RAILS region
- Legislative or policy approaches that expand equitable access to library services
- Sustainable funding models to support service expansion or collaboration
- Partnerships with state and local stakeholders to address service gaps
- Barriers to access related to geography

This discussion is intended to be exploratory, with the goal of identifying some actionable concepts that could be refined over time.

Review of Prior Committee Discussion

As a reminder, previous committee meetings have surfaced a range of ideas and themes related to the unserved. Committee members may wish to revisit prior meeting agenda and discussion notes, which are available here:

[Universal Service Committee Meetings](#)

Some common threads from earlier conversations have included strengthening awareness of unserved populations and exploring both legislative and collaborative approaches to expanding access. Members have also discussed the importance of identifying realistic and implementable strategies.

Consideration for ILA Public Policy Committee Submission

The committee may wish to evaluate whether any of the ideas generated during this discussion are appropriate for development into a formal proposal to the ILA Public Policy Committee. If so, staff and committee members could work to refine concepts, assess feasibility, and prepare submissions ahead of the anticipated August deadline.

Potential considerations for submission include:

- Alignment with ILA's current policy priorities
- Clarity of the problem statement related to unserved populations
- Feasibility of implementation at the state or regional level
- Potential partners or stakeholders who would need to be engaged

Next Steps

This agenda item is intended as a brainstorming session to help develop a focused set of priorities that can inform FY2027 planning and potential initiatives.

We look forward to continuing this discussion at the June Universal Service Committee meeting, where ideas can be further shaped and prioritized.