

DAVID VITTER
LOUISIANA

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 21, 2016

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Hart Senate Office Building
Suite SH-516
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-4623
Fax: (202) 228-5061

BATON ROUGE

858 Convention Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802
(225) 383-0331
Fax: (225) 383-0952

Website with
E-Mail Access: vitter.senate.gov

The Honorable Carla Hayden
Librarian of Congress
The Library of Congress
101 Independence Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20540

Dear Dr. Hayden,

On March 22, 2016, the Policy and Standards Division of the Library of Congress released its decision to eliminate the terms “aliens” and “illegal aliens” in all subject headings maintained by the Library. In turn, the Library has chosen to replace the terms with “noncitizens” and “unauthorized immigration.” This change is inconsistent with the current text of federal law, and I believe it inaccurately describes individuals residing in the United States with no legal authorization to do so.

As noted by the Library’s own statement, the heading “aliens” is one of the oldest headings in *Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCHS)*, having been initially published in the first edition of the *Subject Headings Used in the Dictionary Catalogues of the Library of Congress*, the precursor to today’s LCHS, between 1910 and 1914. In addition to being used by the Library for more than 100 years, it is also extensively used in Title 8 of the United States Code, which contains the Immigration and Nationality Act, and in regulations issued by several federal government agencies.

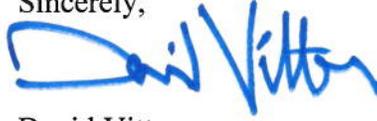
“Alien” is defined in 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(3) as “any person not a citizen or national of the United States.” Further, Title 8 along with several Federal agencies make specific reference to “illegal aliens,” describing aliens who have entered the United States improperly without approval from an immigration officer and who may therefore face penalties under federal law, including deportation. Despite Title 8 containing specific, clear definitions, the Library is persisting in eliminating the subject headings and replacing them with headings that are inaccurate at best and that will only lead to greater confusion.

Lastly, the Library’s statement explains that the revision was done in response to constituent requests, with two of the main impetuses coming from Dartmouth University and the American Library Association. I find it troubling that the Library would cave to the political pressures of outside groups, which fundamentally contradicts its mission to serve the United States Congress. If the American people object to the current terms in federal law, the course of action should include petitioning Congress to consider amending the law, rather than using the Library to make a political statement.

ACADIANA	CENTRAL LOUISIANA	NORTHEAST LOUISIANA	NORTHWEST LOUISIANA	SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA	SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA
2201 KALISTE SALOOM ROAD SUITE 201 LAFAYETTE, LA 70508 (337) 993-9502 FAX: (337) 993-9567	6501 COLISEUM BOULEVARD SUITE 700-A ALEXANDRIA, LA 71303 (318) 448-0169 FAX: (318) 448-0189	1651 LOUISVILLE AVENUE SUITE 148 MONROE, LA 71201 (318) 325-8120 FAX: (318) 325-9165	920 PIERREMONT ROAD SUITE 113 SHREVEPORT, LA 71106 (318) 861-0437 FAX: (318) 861-4865	2800 VETERANS BOULEVARD SUITE 201 METAIRIE, LA 70002 (504) 589-2753 FAX: (504) 589-2607	949 RYAN STREET SUITE E LAKE CHARLES, LA 70601 (337) 436-0453 FAX: (337) 436-3163

I find this politically-motivated change tremendously disconcerting and strongly urge the Library of Congress to revoke these cancellations and reinstate the long-standing and more accurate headings of "alien" and "illegal alien."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Vitter". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "D" and a cursive "Vitter".

David Vitter
United States Senator