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The Honorable Charlie Crist
Governor of the State of Florida
PL-05 The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

April 17, 2007

Re: Library Services for Floridians

Dear Governor Crist:

I am writing to you as President of the Florida Library Association to express our concern over the potential impact some reported proposals for modifying Florida's tax structure would have on library services in Florida. I write especially in view of the leadership that your administration has shown on so many issues, and particularly the property tax issue, believing that your understanding of our concerns may be useful in arriving at a measured response to taxing issues.

In Florida, counties and cities are not required to provide residents with public library services, so that as vital as libraries are, these services are provided and funded at the local governments' discretion. Over the years, as recessions have cycled through, public libraries have grown accustomed to being among the first services to have their budgets cut, and among the last to see funding restored when economic times improve. Currently, our members are reporting that they are being advised by their local governments to brace for severe funding cutbacks.

This is not a time when library services should be reduced – Floridians need more library service, not less. Libraries are working hard to support important state priorities such as reading and preparing young children to be ready to learn when they reach school. They are increasingly providing E-Government Services by providing the clients of state agencies with computers and help with applications and forms.

As you know, most of the funding for libraries comes from local ad valorem taxes. These local funds have been supplemented by State Aid to Libraries, but the amount of state aid has been static for many years. In fact, an increase in state aid passed in last year's budget was vetoed by Governor Bush.

Clearly, taxing affects Floridians in many ways. It is our hope through this letter to focus on one service, one which we believe is vital to public welfare, which may be affected by changes in the state's taxing structure. As I indicated earlier, it is clear that your administration is sensitive to balancing the needs of all Floridians, and we are confident we can count on you to be mindful of Floridian's needs for public library service as you continue to lead on the issue of taxes.

Sincerely,

Charlie Parker
President
Florida Library Association