

Florida Library Association Statement on Florida's Property Tax Reform Debate

May 16, 2007

We applaud the Legislature's desire to correct tax inequities and examine ways to reduce the tax burden on Floridians. However, as Florida's leaders consider how to address these issues, we urge them to be mindful of the effects that local government reductions have on highly valued services such as public libraries.

Floridians vote with their feet when it comes to supporting their public libraries. Each year, Florida libraries host more than 72 million visitors who check out 100 million books. Additionally, programs for young people attract more than 2.7 million attendees.

Libraries support community priorities including reading, preparing young children to learn, and providing access to computers and the Internet. The public library is a central defining element of every community. Florida's county and city leaders understand the value of their libraries and support them to meet residents' demands and serve Florida's rapidly growing population.

Libraries provide all these benefits for a mere average of \$26.53 per person per year. Further, a 2004 study sponsored by the Florida Department of State found that public libraries return \$6.54 for every \$1.00 invested — one of the most cost-effective investments of public monies in Florida. However, since libraries are not mandated and are not related to public safety, when local government revenues are reduced, library funding is among the first cut, and the last restored. We hope the leaders who are grappling with these difficult issues will agree with us that this is not a time when library services should be reduced. Indeed, in times of change and challenge, Floridians need more library service, not less.

Charlie Parker
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