Why Floridians Need State Aid to Public Libraries

The Florida library community appreciates the strong support of the Florida Legislature, the Governor and local leaders who recognize the value libraries bring to their communities. Here is a brief description of the State Aid to Libraries program and the benefits to Floridians through the public libraries receiving this funding.

State Aid to Libraries Grant Program

- **$27,409,823 – The current State Aid to Libraries appropriation** – This past session the Legislature and Governor approved a $5,110,989 increase, a positive step toward returning to 2001’s $33.4 million.

- **Background** – The State Aid program was established in 1961 (F.S. 257) to aid and encourage the establishment of free library service statewide. The program is administered by the Florida Department of State, Division of Library and Information Services.

- **How It Works** – Dollars are divided among libraries based on their communities’ tax base, local library support, and participation in multicounty systems. In 2014-15, 88 county and city library systems are projected to receive State Aid. Your library’s State Aid grant for 2014-15 can be found at http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/bld/grants/StateAid/estimated2014-2015grants.pdf

Why Florida Needs State Support for Public Libraries

- **Libraries Large and Small Are Innovating!** – Libraries are transforming themselves in community hubs providing community engagement, learning environments, and content creation!

- **Floridians love their libraries!** – Currently 51% of Floridians have library cards. They visited the library over 78.5 million times, made 94.8 million virtual visits, and checked out over 120 million items in 2013.

- **At libraries, young children learn to read and parents learn to be their child’s first teacher** – Libraries provide reading programs for toddlers, parents and caregivers. In 2012 2.5 million Florida children attended 91,000 library-sponsored programs. Parents and caregivers borrowed books to read to young children and learned to help them learn. Early exposure to books makes a huge difference in school success.

- **Job Searchers** – The biggest challenge facing Florida is getting folks back to work, and libraries are at the forefront of that effort. Libraries are playing a big role in helping job searchers prepare resumes and submit applications online.

- **Small Business Resources** – All libraries offer business reference material and support for job seekers. Some provide extensive web-based resources selected specifically to meet the needs of the business community. Some libraries partner with Chambers of Commerce to provide business training and investment programs. Others offer business assistance centers with resources and specialized staff.

- **E-Government Services** – Libraries help Floridians reach the government services they need online. Public libraries provide computers, Internet access, and wi-fi to access services from local, state, and federal government.

- **21st Century Technology, Information and Communication Skills** – To be successful in our information-based economy, Floridians need to know how to use technology, find reliable information, and communicate effectively. Florida libraries play a vital role in helping folks learn these skills through both formal classes and informal coaching and by providing opportunities for hands-on learning.

Like public education, libraries need State funding – The state has an interest in public education and should help fund it. The State also has an interest in ensuring that all Floridians have a basic level of public library service and should help fund libraries, too.

State Aid to public libraries is required to receive $7.9 Million in federal funds – The federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) provides annual funding to Florida. Continued State funding for libraries, or “Maintenance of Effort,” is required to continue receiving those dollars.

Thank You!

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