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STATE AID FUNDING FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES TO BE ELIMINATED

Florida Library Association asks Floridians to voice their Support for Library Funding

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (March 11, 2010) – On March 10, appropriations committees in the Florida House and Senate adopted positions eliminating all funding for Florida's State Aid to Public Libraries program. This devastating action will result in some Florida library branches closing and will seriously cripple libraries' ability to serve Floridians. Libraries have already taken their share of local and state budget cuts. This will be especially damaging to libraries in Florida's rural communities, as these libraries rely heavily on provisions in the program that help communities with lower tax bases.

This action comes at a particularly bad time for Floridians who are turning to their public libraries for help during these challenging times:

- Job seekers turn to libraries to learn about and apply for jobs.
- Floridians needing to apply for critical E-Government services and benefits are getting help from library staff, computers, and Internet service.
- Florida families are relying on library books, cd's, and dvd's to stretch household budgets.
- Families continue to rely on libraries to help children learn to read and help parents and caregivers learn to be children's first teachers.

The library community knows that the state budget is seriously challenged, but library funding has already been cut by over a third, from \$33.4 million in 2001 to \$21.2 million today. Local library funding has been deeply cut in the last 3 years and more reductions are coming in 2010-11. Many libraries are reporting cuts exceeding 30%. If state funding is reduced below the current level critically needed federal funds will also be lost.

Library funding was saved last session when the program was threatened at the last minute and Florida residents rose up and legislators restored the funding. The Florida Library Association (FLA) is calling on Governor Charlie Crist and legislative leaders to find a way to fund this critical program, which has helped support public library service to Floridians since 1962.

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