

You did it! The people of Florida roared - and the state's leaders listened!

by Charlie Parker for the Florida Library Association

Yesterday afternoon, during the Joint Budget Conference Chairs process, the House proposed funding State Aid at \$21,253,978 and last night the Senate just came back and accepted, but the Senate was not willing to accept the funding source proposed by the House so state aid funding was left in limbo overnight.

This morning they came back and met through the day. The decision was reached shortly after 7 p.m.

As FLA Lobbyist Chris Lyon explained it, you did what cannot be done. State Aid was not a conference issue. The Joint Budget Conference Chairs weren't even supposed to be talking about this.

So last night Chris was sitting in bar before going back to the 8 o'clock meeting, and a guy walks up, sees he is working on appropriations spreadsheets. Chris tells him he's working for libraries (and did he ever!). The guy works in the Governor's office and wants to know if they've restored the funding yet. He says everybody in the governor's office knows about it because the phone hasn't stopped ringing on the issue and **they've had citizens coming in person on the issue since Thursday.**

I wish that everyone in the Florida library community could see my e-mail from the last 2 days. In every part of the state folks stepped up, got engaged, and made this happen. We will never know just how extensive this effort was, but we have seen signs of extensive networks and efforts in the smallest towns in the state. There are so many wonderful stories. So many folks did so many innovative and clever things. And normal Floridians who had never called or e-mailed an official, stood up and roared!

Some folks to thank!

- Governor Crist - He was down there working it with the Conferees. We asked for his help - and he responded.
- Rep. Nehr - from Pinellas - and lots of others, who went to the leaders and said you've got to do this!
- Senator Alexander and Rep. Rivera who would not give up on our issue! And Senator Fasano, Rep. Gloriso, and Rep. Evers who have been there for us since the day one!
- Secretary Kurt Browning, who has been on the hill, working for us, ably supported by Rivers Buford and Judi Ring.
- Chris Doolin from the Small County Coaliton - and Danny Hales who has helped keep those folks engaged! Chris has really been working it!

The Florida Association of Counties - FAC worked on this issue hard with their members and the community lobbyists they interact with. Friday, a Tallahassee news crew wanted to do a piece on the story and we had a little trouble getting someone to the Capitol in time to shoot it. We called Cragin Mosteller, the FAC Communications Director, and she arranged for Sarrah Troncoso to do tell the story. Sarrah did a great job. She and the rest of the FAC team were working the issue for us in the Capitol. Many thanks to Chris Holley and the wonderful FAC team!

Salter>Mitchell Marketing and Communications - Friday morning we needed to get our message out and did not even have a good media list. We e-mailed the wonderful folks at Salter>Mitchell, asking for help - with no money. These are the folks that did such a great job a year or 2 back when we were trying to position libraries to come through the property tax challenges. Lisa Hall responded immediately. She distributed our press release and communications and worked the issue for us in the Capitol. Lisa was the one who got us the opportunity for the news piece described above. Many thanks to Lisa and especially April Salter!

- The Florida press corps who picked up our issue and put it out there!
- And one more time Faye Roberts, who did a beautiful job yesterday as Communications Director, explaining things to the media.
- And Lisa Manners - the Capwiz message County went over 9,000.
- Tom Sloan and the SEFLIN folks put up a page like Capwiz and handled hundreds of messages.

Please, please, please, tell your folks how wonderful a job they did. And tell them about how strong they are! We "Called out the Librarians" and when we did the people of the great state of Florida came through! They were confident, informed, positive, and strong!

- An added example...
- Paul Clark's story - Here's an example of the incredible work done by folks in the Florida library community. This is Paul's response to the story that ran late yesterday in the St. Pete Times blog, "The Buzz" (with minor edits)...

... I woke up at 6:00 a.m. today. A staff member from the Jefferson County Public Library (Kitty) and myself met up at 6:45 a.m. and drove to Target Copy to make "Save Our Libraries" signs. We then went to the Capitol where we picketed in front of the meeting one this morning. Doug also joined us in time to participate. I have been working non-stop at the Capital on Thurs, Fri and today in talking with the legislators personally and over 30+ Senator Aides, and 30+ Representative Aides as well as the Gov's Aide and pretty much anyone else that would listen to my message. I handing out over 100+ informational pieces of paper to reporters, aides and the like on Friday. I also stood out all day today with the picket signs either at the Knox building where the meetings were taking place or in front of the Capitol Building.

Way to go Paul, Doug, Kitty, and Wilderness Coast Public Libraries

And thanks to everyone else who made this work!