



Leadership. Advocacy. Communication.

Legislative Alert!

January 25, 2010

With the legislature in committee meetings, library Day coming up February 16 and the legislative session beginning March 2 it is time to make one last contact with our legislators. Projections are Florida's revenue will fall \$2.6 billion short of needs so this is certain to be another challenging session and libraries will need all the support we can muster.

Action

- ***Contact Your Legislators*** – Visit, call, or write your legislators and urge them to support libraries and library funding in the up-coming session.
- ***Focus on the Leadership*** - If you are represented by a member of the House or Senate Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations Committees or a member of the legislative leadership it is vitally important for you to contact these legislators (see attached list).
- ***Participate in Library Day – February 16*** – The legislature will be hard at work on appropriations when Florida library advocates are there for Library Day. We have simplified and streamlined the Library Day process and made it easier for those travelling to participate. Go to the [FLA Advocacy page](#) for registration and schedule information. The early registration deadline is January 30. Look for announcements of Library Day Briefing webinars scheduled for February 10th and 11th.
- ***Keep the Library Message Positive and Upbeat!*** – Florida library advocates have a strong positive reputation. Your mom was right - treat your legislators and state leaders with dignity and respect and it will reflect back positively on libraries!

The Message

Please - No more library budget cuts! - Floridians are turning to their public libraries more than ever due to the troubled economy and we are proud that libraries are coming through in Floridians' time of need! We know the state budget is severely challenged but library funding has already been significantly cut at the state and local levels.

Public Library state funding has been cut from \$33.4 2 million in 2001 to \$21.2 million today and local funding has been deeply cut with more cuts coming. If state funding is eliminated, libraries will close in communities all over the state – in large counties, rural counties, and cities and if funding is reduced, Florida will lose critically needed federal funds.

Last spring when library funding was threatened, Floridians rose up, Florida's leaders listened, and library funding was restored. So we ask again, please, hold the line on library funding so libraries can continue to help Floridians in these difficult times!

Libraries help Floridians find jobs – Job-hunting is drawing people to libraries today more than ever. Floridians use library Internet and wireless services to search for jobs, computers for creating resumes, and help from librarians in locating job sources. A recent American Library Association study, ["A Perfect Storm Brewing: Budget Cuts Threaten Library Services at Time of Increased Demand,"](#) reports that job seekers and those seeking help in obtaining benefits are hurt by budget cuts because of resulting closed branches, reduced hours, and fewer trained staff.

Libraries help Floridians use E-Government services – Increasingly, Floridians visit libraries for help in applying for essential government services and transacting their business with government agencies. Almost all agencies encourage the public to transact business electronically and have reduced direct customer service. In many areas the library is residents' only source for computers and skilled assistance with services including those provided by the Department of Children and Families, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the IRS, just to name a few.

Libraries play a major role in higher education and lifelong learning – Access to accurate, current information is essential in our "information society." Databases provided by Florida's public academic libraries offer students and the citizens of the state access to thousands of publications and data sources that are not freely available elsewhere.

Libraries help households economize with free materials – Families are rediscovering the public library as a source for free reading material, CDs and DVDs that they can no longer afford to purchase.

Libraries play a critical role in children's learning – Libraries help young children learn to read and help parents and caregivers learn to be children's first teachers. Children and families benefit from homework assistance programs, tutoring, homeschoolers' support, and casual library experience. Teens benefit from a safe environment for reading, computers, games and a supervised place to socialize.

Library Funding Needs

- State Aid to Public Libraries - \$21.2 million
- Library Cooperative Program - \$1.5 million
- Public Library Construction - \$10.5 million
- State University Libraries – FLA supports funding request of the Florida Center for Library Automation (FCLA) and requests for electronic resources
- State Colleges – FLA Supports the funding request of the College Center for Library Automation and requests for electronic resources