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Why We Need State Aid to Public Libraries in 2013

The Florida legislature has strongly supported the State Aid to Public Libraries program and the Florida library community appreciates those legislators and leaders who have stepped up for library service for their communities. As we look forward to new legislators entering the legislature and the 2013 regular session, it is timely to present the rationale for State Aid to Public Libraries and for state funding.

The Program Today

- ***The Current State Aid to Public Libraries Appropriation is \$21.3 Million.*** This funding for Florida libraries has already been cut by 1/3 over the past 10 years from \$33.4 million in 2001!
- ***Background*** – The 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 State Library and Archives of Florida, a Division of the Florida Department of State.
- ***How It Works*** – Dollars are divided among libraries based on their communities' tax base, local support, and whether they belong to multicounty systems. In 2009, 33 county libraries received over 25% of their funding from State Aid. Your library's estimated 2012-13 funding can be found at <http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/bld/grants/StateAid/estimated2012-2013grants.pdf>

Why Florida Needs State Support for Public Libraries!

- ***Floridians Love Their Libraries!*** – Fifty-nine percent – over 11 million Floridians - have library cards. In 2009-10 they visited the library over 87 million times and borrowed over 129 million items.
- ***Help Florida Business!*** – All libraries offer business reference material and support for job seekers. Some provide extensive web-based resources selected specifically to meet business community needs. Some libraries partner with local Chambers of Commerce to provide business and investment information and programs. Some offer business assistance centers with extensive resources and staff specialists.
- ***Public libraries Are Where Young Children Learn To Read and Parents Learn To Be Their Child's First Teacher*** – Libraries provide reading programs for toddlers, parents and caregivers. They provide books so parents and caregivers can read to young children and conduct pre-school programs so parents can learn to be their child's first teacher. Exposing children to books makes a huge difference in their success in school.
- ***Help for Job Searchers*** – The biggest challenge facing Florida is getting folks back to work, and libraries are at the forefront of that effort. Libraries play a big role helping job searchers prepare resumes and submit applications online.
- ***Support for E-Government Services*** – Libraries help Floridians reach needed government services over the Internet. Public libraries provide computers, Internet access, and most provide wireless access to support those who need services from local, state, and federal government.
- ***The Need for State Funding for Libraries Is Just Like the Need for Public Education*** – There is no question that 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 access to at least a minimum level of public library service and should help fund libraries too.
- ***State Aid to Public Libraries Is Required to Receive FLA's Full Allotment in Federal Library Funding*** – Florida received \$7.8 million in FY 2012 through the federal Library Services Technology Act (LSTA). Continued state funding, or Maintenance of Effort, is required to continue to receive the state's full allocation of federal funds.
- ***Libraries Help Floridians Learn 21st Century Technology, Information, & 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 formal classes and informal coaching.

Thank You!

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