



NJLA Legislative & Budget Priorities, FY2013

New Jersey's Libraries: Partners in Economic Development, Cornerstones of Community Life

Libraries are essential. Insuring that the residents of New Jersey have strong, relevant library services to meet the challenges of the 21st century and aid the economic recovery requires a funding partnership between local libraries and the state of New Jersey.

STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Passage with amendments of A2284, or new legislation, to establish in statute a process of dissolution of public libraries by public referendum, as public libraries are currently formed by public referendum.

Continue to review new models for local library service to assure both stable, equitable funding and efficient, effective service delivery across New Jersey. Recommend legislative changes as needed.

STATE BUDGETARY PRIORITIES

In FY2011 State funding for Library programs was reduced by 43%. Critical resources were eliminated and direct aid to libraries reduced to the lowest level in decades.

THE STATE PER CAPITA AID PROGRAM IS UNDERFUNDED BY 62%, THEREFORE WE ARE SEEKING FULL FUNDING OF \$9.7 MILLION PER N.J.S.A. 18A:74-3.

The Per Capita State Aid Program is direct aid to every local library. Funding of \$9.7 million would restore the program to full funding as specified in N.J.S.A. 18A:74-3, which would provide \$1.11 per person of state funding for library service in New Jersey. The current funding is \$3,676,000, or approximately \$0.42 per person. To fulfill the commitment to the state per capita aid program we seek an additional \$5.9 million.

State aid to school districts was over \$10 billion in FY2012, which included an increase of \$804 million in the last year. As a major educational component in the community, public libraries serve the entire community, including serving as a key resource for homeschoolers, many charter schools, senior citizens and the unemployed.

PRESERVATION OF NEW JERSEY LIBRARY NETWORK FUNDING AT THE CURRENT LEVEL OF \$4.299 MILLION IS CRUCIAL.

For over 20 years, the New Jersey Library Network has linked libraries of all types throughout the state by sharing resources and realizing economies of scale. Strong public support is evident for the valuable services provided at the local level through this efficient and cost effective model. The existing funding of \$4.299 million is necessary to maintain the benefits of shared services and fulfill maintenance of effort requirements for federal funding.

For FY2013 the New Jersey Library Association also endorses an increase of funding for \$1.5 million to the New Jersey Library Network. This funding is requested to support statewide initiatives related to improving access to broadband, expanding electronic resources available to New Jersey businesses and residents and supporting libraries in providing access to e-government resources.

SAFEGUARDING AND PRESERVING LIBRARY SERVICE IN OUR DISTRESSED ECONOMIC AREAS DURING THIS ECONOMIC DOWNTURN, WHERE PER CAPITA SPENDING IS FAR BELOW STATE OR NATIONAL AVERAGES FOR THOSE WHO MOST NEED AND USE LIBRARIES TO IMPROVE AND EMPOWER THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES IS A PRIORITY.

New Jersey's distressed economic areas have been hardest hit in this recession and the effects on Libraries and residents have been devastating. Hours and services have been slashed and numerous library branches have closed. Eleven branches have closed to date, including all four branches in Trenton, three branches in Camden City, both branches in Bayonne and two branches in Newark. Furthermore, eight libraries in communities with an unemployment rate greater than 11% in 2010 including Milford, Newark, Woodbury and Dover, sustained funding declines greater than 12% since FY2007.

Distressed economic areas in New Jersey do not have the ratable base to provide sustainable library services at the minimum funding levels. Library service in our population centers must be preserved during this downturn through transitional funding. Five million dollars is sought to implement these library safeguards based on populations served, funding levels and other criteria to be established and administered by the New Jersey State Library.

LOCAL FUNDING PRIORITIES

Strong library services are a critical factor in enhancing the quality of life and economic vitality of our state. Library resources provide vital educational and economic opportunities for the residents of New Jersey. It is fundamental to have strong local libraries which can expand services to residents through the availability of statewide library resources and through resource sharing agreements. The New Jersey Library Association also firmly believes in the value of twenty-first century learning skills through strong K-12 schools and academic libraries.

The residents of New Jersey support funding for public libraries. In April 2010, over 80,000 residents signed postcards and 60,000 sent emails to their legislators supporting the restoration of funding for statewide library services. The highest priority of the New Jersey Library Association is to maintain strong support for public library services.

NEW JERSEY LIBRARY QUICK FACTS

A recent survey of New Jersey residents revealed that 83% say funding public libraries is a good investment of public dollars.

71% of New Jersey residents believe that a public library is an essential service for the community.

Based on the most recent annual statistics available (2010):

- Almost 63 million items were checked out of New Jersey Libraries.
- New Jersey residents made almost 50 million visits to their Libraries.
- Public Internet computers in New Jersey Libraries were used almost 11 million times.
- New Jersey residents asked more than 8.4 million reference questions.
- More than 3.3 million books were read during summer reading programs alone.
- 4.5 million New Jersey residents have library cards.

- On any given day there are about 550 programs available in New Jersey Libraries – more than 400 of which are sponsored by local libraries.

Approved by the NJLA Executive Board Sept. 20, 2011