



Proposal to Change Minimum Library Funding Level

Background

In November 2008 the League of Municipalities adopted a resolution calling for a change in New Jersey law to lower the minimum funding level for municipal public libraries from 1/3 mil in equalized valuation to 1/6 mil. Such a change would have a devastating effect on all libraries in the state. Libraries funded at current minimum 1/3 mill could see their funding level subjected to a 50% decrease. This would lead to large scale cut backs in library services in those communities at a time when library usage is growing and is needed more than ever. Libraries funded at above the minimum funding level would see their own services stretched as New Jersey residents seek out neighboring libraries to provide needed services which their local communities could no longer offer. This could severely impact existing local agreements for sharing of library resources among libraries.

While this action of the League of Municipalities has not yet become a proposed bill in the legislature, it is important that the state's library community sends a strong message that any reduction in the minimum library funding is unacceptable. Some local library boards have passed resolutions in opposition to this proposal. The New Jersey Library Association Board has approved the following model resolution to assist library boards who wish to take action at this time. This model resolution, developed by the NJLA Public Policy Committee, should be reviewed and revised or edited as may be needed to meet local circumstances. NJLA requests that copies of any resolutions on this matter be sent to our office so that we may keep a record of statewide response to this potentially devastating proposal.

Development by the NJLA Public Policy Committee December 2008

**MODEL RESOLUTION FOR MUNICIPAL PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARDS TO USE
RE: FUNDING OF MUNICIPAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

Whereas the New Jersey League of Municipalities (“League”) passed a resolution, at its 2008 annual conference, to seek to reduce the minimum funding level for New Jersey municipal public libraries from 1/3 mil to 1/6 mil of **equalized assessed valuation**, and has forwarded that resolution to the Legislature (**2008-03 Resolution Recommending Amendment Regarding Tax Levies for Free Public Libraries**); and

Whereas municipal public libraries have been established at the direction of its citizens through a binding referendum which specified the minimum funding level at 1/3 of a mil and

Whereas public libraries are vital community centers providing essential services to the residents of their municipalities, **even more so during these difficult economic times**; and

Whereas the current funding formula for municipal libraries has endured for over 100 years providing a stable source of tax support for municipal library services;

Whereas the resolution proposed by the League would critically weaken the foundation of library services in New Jersey by drastically reducing the minimum funding level which would directly impact library services;

Whereas the fiscal hardships facing many residents and businesses require access to key information resources available in New Jersey’s free public libraries, such as access to computers for educational or business needs, or to find jobs and other opportunities; and increases the use of the other services of the public library, such as borrowing books and other media or attending programs for children and the entire family;

Now therefore be it resolved by the Board of Trustees (“Board”) of the _____ Free Public Library assembled in open public meeting on _____, that said Board protests the action of the League **in adopting Resolution 2008-03 and forwards this resolution to the League, to the state Senator and the Assemblypersons representing the district in which _____ Library is located**;

In addition, this Board asks the Mayor and Council (or Committee) of the _____ of _____ to also adopt a formal resolution in protest of the League’s **Resolution 2008-03** and that both the Board and the Mayor and Council or Committee forward their resolutions to the League, to the state Senator and the Assemblypersons representing the district in which the Library is located;

And be it further resolved that the Board recommends and urges that the elected and appointed officials of the _____ of _____ take every possible step to persuade the Legislature and the Governor not to adopt the League’s position.