



**TESTIMONY OF PATRICIA A. TUMULTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NEW JERSEY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
BEFORE THE SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
MARCH 25, 2010**

I am Patricia Tumulty, the Executive Director of the New Jersey Library Association. I am speaking today directly on behalf of the 1700 members of our Association and the 1500 members of the New Jersey Library Trustee Association. But more importantly, I am also speaking on behalf of residents of New Jersey who visited our public libraries over 48 million times last year. Over 170,000 people walk through our doors every day. I guess you can call these people “a special interest group” - the unemployed who use our libraries for job searching and unemployment assistance; students of all grades who use our electronic resources to complete educational assignments; the family who is seeking health information to make sense of a difficult diagnosis by a physician; the young father who wants to instill in his child the love of reading but can’t afford to buy the books; the entrepreneur looking for business leads through RefUSA and the millions who use libraries to improve their quality of life. They do not see the library as an amenity but rather as a community necessity.

My testimony will focus on - the elimination (not merely the reduction) of vital library programs; loss of all federal support for libraries, transfer of Thomas Edison State College and, therefore, the New Jersey State Library to Rutgers University and the need to provide equity for municipal library funding.

BLINDSIDED BY ELIMINATION OF PROGRAMS

Who could come before you and not acknowledge that this is one of the most difficult budgets ever faced by governmental leaders in New Jersey? All programs were told to anticipate cuts – and so were we. Nothing prepared us to tell the public that many of the library services they have come to expect would be totally eliminated by Governor Christie’s FY11 budget.

The budget which you are reviewing for library programs cuts funding a staggering **74%** reduction in one fiscal year. This is a loss of over \$10.4 million and will jeopardize our eligibility for future federal funding in the amount of \$4.5 million. It totally eliminates funding for 3 of the 4 state library programs supported through state funding and cuts the one remaining program by 50%.

Every dollar of state support for programs which provide coordination, cooperation or sharing of library resources on a statewide basis have not been reduced – these programs have been eliminated from this budget. They are simply gone without any discussions on

the impact to the residents of New Jersey. Programs which have created a statewide system of sharing library materials and cooperative purchases among libraries which has been vital to the success of New Jersey libraries for over 25 years. These services will vanish.

The elimination of these programs defies what the Governor is encouraging all governmental entities to do- work cooperatively and effectively together through sharing of resources.

WHAT HAS BEEN LOST

The **New Jersey Library Network** which has joined the resources of public, school, academic and special libraries for 25 years- **funding completely eliminated**. Many services eliminated including the statewide interlibrary loan and delivery services. Last year over 3,000,000 items were borrowed by people using this system. As local budgets get reduced this service becomes more important to local libraries.

Shared catalogue of library materials for statewide use- gone
Electronic resources for public, academic and school libraries- gone
Cooperative purchasing of library materials- gone

The **Virtual Library Program** which supports Internet and email access to public libraries supported through the Jersey Connect program- **funding completely eliminated** In 78% of New Jersey communities the public library is the only place of free Internet access. This will be gone.

New Jersey Knowledge Initiative- statewide program which focuses on electronic resources for small businesses- **funding completely eliminated**.

This includes: loss of RefUSA which provides information on thousands of local businesses. Used extensively by small business owners and job seekers. The cost for one library to buy this is \$22,000. This would be impossible for most local libraries.

Every one of these services supports cooperation and collaboration and now they are all eliminated.

WHAT'S LEFT IN THE STATE BUDGET FOR LIBRARIES?

The only library funding which has remained in the FY11 budget is funding for the state per capita aid program which provides assistance to local public libraries. Funding for this program is proposed at \$3,676,000 million which is a 50% reduction from the FY10 appropriation level. This program was funded at \$8,665,000 in FY08. So the overall reductions for this program are over \$5,000,000 in three years.

I know you will hear testimony from many groups that funding for their programs are at its lowest levels in 15 years. This takes our funding level back to the 1970s when only books were required for library service- not computers, the Internet or electronic resources.

FEDERAL FUNDING FOR LIBRARIES WILL BE FORFEITED

Because of these devastating state cuts, it will begin the process of forfeiting \$4.5 million in federal funds in the future. The federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) has a maintenance of effort clause. With the cuts to the New Jersey Library Network and the Virtual Library programs, NJ will no longer be eligible for LSTA funding in subsequent fiscal years. The state dollars put in this year's budget, therefore, have a direct correlation to federal funding for libraries. Future funding for the New Jersey State Library Talking Book and Braille Center, formerly the Library for the Blind and Handicapped, will be impacted because it is totally funded through federal funding.

It is hard to imagine the total impact of these service reductions. Although most services will not "disappear" exactly on July 1, I can certainly assure you that by January 2011, library service in New Jersey will be decimated.

The New Jersey State Library has also just submitted an application for a \$7.5 million federal grant through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to provide broadband technology to our public libraries through our Jersey Connect system. This application received approximately 40 letters of support from Governor Christie, our two federal senators, several congressmen, numerous legislative leaders and many community groups. Unfortunately, Jersey Connect is one of the programs facing elimination under this budget. We can not build for the future if our programs are being dismantled.

Library funding in New Jersey is interrelated. It is a triangle. Local libraries rely on our state funding to provide the structure which joins our services together and state dollars are used to qualify for federal funding. Each funding component is related to each other. When one is removed, the triangle falls apart.

EQUITY FOR MUNICIPAL LIBRARY FUNDING

Although not directly related to the state budget, this issue does have fiscal implications for library services throughout the state and would fall under the purview of this committee. For over twenty years, municipal free public libraries were exempt from the "cap" legislation. Unfortunately when this legislation was revised in 2007, municipal libraries were not included as a cap exemption. The 245 municipalities which support municipal and joint libraries were impacted by this action. County library funding, however, is exempt from the cap because it is considered a dedicated tax and listed separately on the homeowner's bill.

This situation must be rectified. We understand the legislature's concern regarding amending the "cap" legislation at this time. Our goal is not to have another exemption to the "cap" legislation but rather to list funding for municipal libraries as a dedicated tax (such as municipal open space tax). This would then bring fiscal parity between those communities that support municipal libraries and those that support county libraries.

TRANSFER TO RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

We were also extremely concerned to see the Governor propose “transferring” Thomas Edison State College and the New Jersey State Library to Rutgers University. The New Jersey State Library plays a fundamental role in library leadership in our state. Its direction has been central to library development throughout New Jersey. The New Jersey Library Association has been very happy with our relationship with Thomas Edison State College. We were actively involved in discussions to move the State Library to Thomas Edison in the 1990s. We strongly support these organizations and wish to be actively involved in discussing this critical issue which will directly impact all libraries in New Jersey.

SAVE NEW JERSEY LIBRARIES

The New Jersey Library Association has launched an effort to save New Jersey libraries. Faced with these massive budget cuts and threats to our local funding we believe that New Jersey’s libraries face the most crucial period of their history. I assure you that you will be hearing from your residents regarding restoring this funding. I cannot tell their story adequately. They are the ones who will directly feel the impact on the local level when these services are eliminated. They can speak

You will make modifications to Gov. Christie’s budget. We urge you to restore the funding which has been eliminated so that vital programs which create a strong statewide, coordinated library system will be saved.

I am often asked if the Internet will kill libraries. The answer is no, but lack of governmental support and commitment most certainly will.