



New York Library Association

The Voice of the Library Community

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Libraries Targeted Again in State Budget

ALBANY, NY– The Division of Budget is once again calling for a disproportionate cut in funding for library services by proposing an \$18 million (18%) cut in Library Aid in the 2009-10 State Budget on top of the 3% cut in funding that occurred in 2008. These cuts would bring Library Aid to a level not seen since 1993.

“Libraries continue to be targeted for disproportionate cuts to solve the state’s budget problems. We are willing to do our part, but an 18% cut in funding is both unfair and counter-productive,” stated Michael J. Borges, Executive Director of the New York Library Association.

Library Aid was reduced from \$103 million in 2007 to \$100 million in April and then reduced further to \$98.5 million in August of this year. Library Aid had remained stagnant for eight years between 1998-2006, when the Legislature finally agreed to modest increases in funding and began utilizing the 2000 Census to calculate Library Aid instead of the 1990 Census.

“Libraries are an important component of our communities, schools and college campuses, and play an important role in educating and informing citizens of all ages. There seems to be no recognition by state budget makers that library usage has skyrocketed over the last year as more people turn to libraries for finding jobs, improving their literacy skills and for free reading materials and programs for their families,” continued Mr. Borges.

The cuts will fall heavily on the 73 library systems throughout the state that are the backbone of our libraries and information infrastructure. Library systems provide libraries with shared services, like inter-library loans, centralized cataloging, website hosting and staff training. They are an example of how the library community has long been a champion and role model for regional cooperation, resource sharing and providing services in a cost-effective and efficient manner that saves libraries of all types and their patron’s money.

“The state is proposing to cut the very mechanisms that enable libraries to serve 75% of New York households in a cost-effective and efficient manner. On one hand they are asking communities to do things collaboratively to save taxpayers money and on the other hand they are cutting the very means to make it happen. It makes absolutely no sense what so ever,” continued Mr. Borges.

“To add insult to injury, the NYS Department of Tax and Finance issued a press release saying they are no longer mailing tax forms to individuals and that taxpayers should go to their public libraries to pick up or download forms. The state is literally passing the buck to libraries and taking it away at the same time,” concluded Mr. Borges.

