

BCCLS ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

Trustee Info & Action

May 2014- State Aid

Overview:

Library trustees should advocate on the local, state, and national level to pursue adequate funding for their library. As a member of the library board, one should work towards building relationships with elected officials towards this end goal. These activities are just a few of the top ten responsibilities of library board trustees. All ten are found on the excellent website of the *N.J. Library Trustee Association* at:

<http://www.njlibrarytrustees.org/resources/links> under “Roles & Responsibilities of Library Trustees.”

This month, we are asking you to take action towards advocating for the return of State Aid funding for N.J. libraries. As we all have witnessed, State Aid has dropped considerably over the last 5 years. However, there is currently \$3 million dollars of state aid on the legislative table and by your board ADVOCATING for it, that money could come back to libraries.

State Aid – Board Education Component:

What is state aid?

The Per Capita State Aid (PCSA) program is the largest public library grant program administered by the State Library and is the foundation of state support for public libraries. The first State Per Capita Aid Act was passed by the New Jersey Legislature in 1959. Its passage set a precedent that the State of New Jersey had a critical partnership role in providing quality library service for the residents of New Jersey.

Where can I find this legislation?

N.J.S.A. 18A:74-1 (New Jersey Statutes Annotated, Title 18A: Education, Chapter 74 – State Library Aid Law.)

How is state aid calculated for municipalities?

N.J.S.A. 18A:74-3. State aid is based on a calculation taking into account annual expenditures for library services by the municipality in the previous year along with equalized valuation, and the number of inhabitants of a municipality (per capita).

What are our library's requirements for receiving state aid?

- Each library must submit the annual, online State Aid Report to the State Librarian. (BCCLS also requires a copy for its records.)
- A member or members of the board must have received a minimum of seven hours of library-related education annually.
- State aid must be used for library purposes.
- State aid must be used within two years.
- BCCLS membership requires libraries meet state aid criteria and be eligible for state aid.

What is the current status of state aid to N.J. Libraries?

In 2011 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. Funding would come back to libraries if the following legislation (A967/S234) is approved:

“This bill makes a supplemental appropriation of \$3 million from the General Fund to increase the State fiscal year 2014 funding for Per Capita Library Aid. The purpose of the bill is to better enable the State’s libraries to serve the public with access to information and cultural enrichment.”

Director's Role:

1. This month review with your board what "State Aid" means and its importance.
2. Stress how State Aid to your library has been reduced in the last several years. (Check how much less it is now than a few years ago.) Your State aid and 1/3 mil amounts can be found on the BCCLS Staff page under "Analyzing Expenses." <http://www.bccls.org/buckles/stats/>
3. Explain the legislation on the table (A967/S234) that would return \$3 million in State Aid to libraries. http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2014/Bills/A1000/967_11.PDF
4. Copy the letter (below), personalize it and address copies of it to your assembly representatives and senator. Your district representatives can be found at: <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/districts/districtnumbers.asp>
You can see if your representatives are already in support of this legislation at: <http://www.njla.org/content/a967s234>
5. Have your board review the letters and have them signed by your board president at your meeting. Mail the letters. Congratulate your board members for actively advocating for your library!

SUGGESTED LETTER TO LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVES

Dear _____:

I am writing to ask your support for current legislation to increase financial support for public libraries in your district. A967/S234 makes a \$3 million supplemental appropriation to increase the State fiscal year 2014 funding for Per Capita Library Aid.

Since the recession, state aid for libraries across the state has dwindled. This loss coupled with the decline in municipal funding for libraries within your district has made it increasingly difficult for us to provide the technological, educational and cultural services that your constituents deserve. Here in (your town) we have experienced a ___% decrease in state aid support since 2008 along with a loss of \$_____ in municipal funding.

Currently the state aid program is only 34% funded at \$3,676,000 or roughly 42 cents per person. This is less than the cost of a postage stamp! As a primary resource for our communities, New Jersey's local libraries not only help to supplement our school systems, but also provide educational resources for all members of our communities, creating an excellent return on monies spent.

Please work with us towards a restoration of state funding so that our libraries can provide the resources our citizens deserve. I look forward to hearing from you about this important issue. Thank you for your leadership and the Board of Trustees of the _____ Library looks forward to working with you in support of our public libraries.

Sincerely,

President, Board of Trustees