



Office of  
Commonwealth Libraries

June 2, 2009

Dear Library Community -

I am writing regarding the impact Senate Bill 850 will have on the future of libraries in Pennsylvania.

Despite the extremely difficult economic situation, the budget that Governor Rendell proposed in February reduced the library subsidy by just 1.5% in recognition that **Pennsylvanians need their libraries more than ever**. In contrast, the budget proposed under Senate Bill 850 **cuts the state library subsidy in half – a move that would lead to drastic cuts in services, resources, library staffing and** reduces the subsidy's buying power to 1995-1996 levels. A 50% cut on the state subsidy will have the devastating impact of reducing local library operating budgets by 10% to 40%.

In addition, Senate Bill 850:

- Eliminates the POWER Library
- Eliminates Reciprocal Borrowing (Statewide Library Card Program)
- Eliminates the agency's support for Interlibrary Delivery Service
- Eliminates virtual reference (Ask Here PA)
- Eliminates construction funds by eliminating the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation grants to libraries

SB850 will further impact libraries as the reduction in state funds will cause Pennsylvania to lose \$3.8 million in federal LSTA funds. This reduction represents 63% of the federal funds that support children's programming, the grant program, program innovation and the development of school, public and academic libraries.

It is not an overstatement to say the library community is at a crossroads. Without a reversal of this reduction to library appropriations, the combined impact of lost state and federal funding will jeopardize the statewide infrastructure among school, public, academic and special libraries that has been built and built up over one hundred years. Please make your voices heard.

You have demonstrated the value of libraries in communities, campuses and schools. Libraries have proven themselves a worthy investment of public dollars and public trust. In good times and in bad, you have demonstrated to your elected officials the public's use of, dependence on and affection for their library. Please make your voices heard.

I am asking for your immediate help. Please work with your community at all levels to contact your legislators making them aware of the devastating effect of SB850 on our libraries which will have a devastating effect on all those you serve so well. Please make your voices heard.

To find your legislator go to: <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/session.cfm> and type in your zip code in the upper right ("Find Members By Zip Code.")

If you have already written your legislator, please write again. I cannot overstate how critical it is for you to take this stand for libraries this year.

Thank you.

M. Clare Zales

Attachment: Impact of Senate Bill 850

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## Impact of Senate Bill 850

Senate Bill 850 cuts \$42 million directly from public library budgets.  
This amount equals the total spent on all materials by all libraries in one year.  
(\$37million in subsidy + \$5 million in statewide card)

### **STATE AID TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES SUBSIDY REDUCED BY HALF FROM \$75,137,000 TO \$37,000,000**

- The State Aid to Public Libraries Subsidy will be cut in half.
  - This funding represents 25% of total operating revenues.
- If this SB850 is enacted it will reduce the average library's total revenues by 12.5%.
- For libraries more heavily state funded the loss will be more significant.  
For example, 21% of libraries will lose between 25% and 39% of their total revenues.
- The library subsidy has not been this low since 1998-1999.  
Yet since that year, library lending increased 30% to 70 million items loaned each year.
- Taking inflation into account the subsidy level will be back to the 1995-1996 level.
- This will reduce the budgets of public libraries in the state at a time when libraries are being used more than ever before.
- The loss of subsidy funding will reduce hours, reduce staff, reduce books, reduce access to jobs, reduce access to e-government resources, reduce access to children's programming.
  - 1,000+ library employees will lose their jobs
  - 500,000 fewer books will be available.
  - Library hours will be reduced by 10% making it difficult for job seekers, business people, students and parents to find the information they need to succeed in this difficult economy.
  - Children's programming will be cut, affecting their reading readiness
  - Parents at risk will no longer have infant and toddler programs geared to their needs.

### **KEYSTONE RECREATION, PARK & CONSERVATION FUND - \$2,525,000 ELIMINATED**

- This is the only source of construction/renovation funding for public libraries.
- The need far exceeds the available funding.
  - 42% of libraries were built before 1952 and are in need of accessibility and energy efficiency improvements.
  - \$335 million is needed to meet planned construction needs through 2013.
- The Keystone funds act as an economic stimulus by requiring matching funds.
  - To date \$30 million in Keystone funds funded 237 projects. With the required match that's \$97million invested in libraries.
  - Keystone funds supported library construction in every library district statewide
  - Without this funding, major construction projects will be stalled
  - Without this funding, smaller projects such as ADA access will not be attempted

## **LIBRARY ACCESS APPROPRIATION - \$7,000,000 ELIMINATED**

**This appropriation funds three programs:**

### **1. Ends the POWER Library**

The POWER Library has provided vetted on-line resources through school and public libraries since 1998. POWER provides a common denominator of authenticated information across the Commonwealth on subject areas of recognized value to students, parents, adults, seniors and entrepreneurs.

- It was the first program to open the door of our libraries making resources available 24/7.
- POWER provided 50 million searches in 2008 from 3,000 libraries
- , a 32% increase in one year.
- Every school district and state aided library receives POWER
- It would cost every school and public library \$40,000 to purchase the POWER package.
- For many of our schools, the POWER Library is the only vetted resource that supports information literacy and the Classrooms for the Future program.
  
- Therefore, students and others will not have resources needed for homework, job training and job announcements and current information on health and economics. This will be especially hard felt in rural areas.
- POWER provides unique, vital support for classroom and individual research and has taken 11 years of concerted effort to organize, purchase and train librarians, teachers and the public in their use.
- Eliminating this program eliminates all back issues of journals, magazines or any of the online newspapers and research that libraries now offer. Where will students go to complete homework assignments?
- Eliminating this program would be a devastating reduction to libraries' capacity to serve. Reinstating it once ended, would be exceedingly costly in rebuilding the training and administrative infrastructure of the program.

### **2. Ends Reciprocal Borrowing**

The Statewide Library Card Program makes it possible for Pennsylvanians to borrow books from libraries other than their local library thereby erasing borders between libraries.

- Without this program, Pennsylvanians would no longer be able to borrow freely from libraries across the state. Instead they will have to purchase a library card from each library.
- Of the 70,000,000 items circulated each year, a full 24% or 17,000,000 are borrowed from other than the patron's home library.
- At the time when libraries are used most heavily and recognized for the economic saving to families, families and individuals will have no option but to purchase a library card from each library they use.
  
- Because libraries are compensated for a portion of the cost of serving residents statewide, libraries will lose this income source that strengthens collections statewide.
- This comes at a time when local resources are decreasing and use is increasing in historic numbers. Borrowing under this program increased by 3,000,000 in 2008.

### **3. Interlibrary Delivery Service – Membership Cost Doubles**

- A portion of the Library Access appropriation subsidizes the cost for individual school, public and academic libraries' membership in a statewide delivery program which moves 2,000,000 books to students and residents statewide. Books delivered increased by 120,000 in 2008.
- With the elimination of this appropriation, membership costs are expected to double. For too many libraries membership costs will become unaffordable thus cutting off their students and patrons from valuable, statewide resource sharing across types of libraries

## **ELECTRONIC LIBRARY CATALOG REDUCED BY HALF FROM \$3,542,000 TO \$1,771,000**

**This Appropriation funds three programs.**

### **1. Ends Ask Here PA Virtual Reference**

Ask Here PA is an online reference service that enables Pennsylvanians to communicate anytime of the day or night with a professional library online in order to find answers to research questions.

- The service operates 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, and is the only safe, authoritative option for students and all others to receive assistance from professional librarians when their libraries are closed.
- This is a two-year old program, which increased 42% in usage over last year.
- The Ask Here PA program currently answers 10,000 questions per month, half of which are from K-12 students.
- Most unfortunately, this popular program would be eliminated before it reached its full potential.

### **2. The Access Pennsylvania Database loses Currency**

This database contains the combined collections of more than 3,018 school, public, academic and special libraries statewide. The database provides access to more than 71 million volumes representing approximately 17 million unique titles. The catalog enables Pennsylvanians to find and order books from anywhere in the Commonwealth.

- The proposed reduction would drastically reduce the currency of holdings on the database from real time updates from some libraries and quarterly updates from others to a greatly reduced updating schedule.
  - Students lose access to current reading materials not available in their own libraries.
- This resource sharing tool has been built and maintained over the past 25 years and is the most frequently consulted finding tool in Pennsylvania for requesting up to date books and media.

### **3. Eliminate the Access PA Millennium System**

This shared library management system serves over 75 school and public libraries who otherwise can not afford to maintain their own book circulation and cataloging systems. This program saves libraries an estimated \$1,125,000 per year.

- This system ends for existing users
- This cost saving option is lost at a time when library budgets are strained.
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