

**TESTIMONY OF PATRICIA A. TUMULTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
NEW JERSEY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION  
BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY BUDGET COMMITTEE MARCH 19, 2003**

I am Patricia Tumulty, the Executive Director of the New Jersey Library Association. I am speaking today directly on behalf of the 1550 members of our Association and the 1400 members of the New Jersey Library Trustee Association. But more importantly, I am also speaking on behalf of the millions of residents of New Jersey who rely upon local libraries as their centers for access to library and information services.

I am speaking on behalf of the budget request for library programs administered by the New Jersey State Library. Since 1995 the State Library has been affiliated with Thomas Edison State College. That affiliation was made permanent with the passage of legislation in July 2001. The partnership between Thomas Edison and the State Library is unique and has resulted in many benefits for the residents of New Jersey. Many of the information services supported by this budget and provided by the State Library are available to every school, public and academic library through the statewide interlibrary loan program and the 24x7 Virtual Library. The provision of information resources on a statewide basis is a model of cooperation among various institutions and provides for cost containment at the local level. More importantly, it provides an equalized playing field for all residents to have access to the information resources that they need.

Public libraries are lifelong learning organizations providing services for pre-schoolers to older adults. They are essential to the quality of life in a community. Libraries in schools and in our higher education institutions are fundamental to a quality program. They are not a luxury but an essential component for achievement.

**LIBRARY USAGE CONTINUES TO GROW**

As a librarian in the age of the Internet, I am often asked if people still use libraries. The answer is absolutely. In fact, more than ever. In the past year utilization of public libraries has grown to over 40 million visits annually. That is 2 million more than the year before. That number is more people than the number who use Newark International Airport, more people than the number that visit the casinos in Atlantic City, that number could fill Giants stadium over 522 times.

Yet mere numbers don't tell the story. Each one of the visits is a personal pursuit- is it the visit of a senior citizen who wants to learn how to email his grandchild, is it the immigrant studying for the citizenship test, is it a child participating in the statewide summer reading program, is it the woman looking for the latest information on treatments for cancer, or is it someone participating in a library literacy program. Every visit tells a story. Every visit is important and every visit adds to the quality of life for a resident of New Jersey.

And now, every day, we have thousands of people visiting the library virtually as people use their computers to obtain statewide online electronic resources that can be accessed 24 hours a day from any computer. Resources like Time Magazine, Newsweek, Business Week, and hundreds more, are available to every resident anywhere and anytime.

### **FY2004 BUDGET**

Governor McGreevey's proposed FY2004 state budget recommends \$14,742,000 for library programs. This is a reduction of \$670,000 from the FY 2003 budget of 15,412,000. These cuts totally eliminate funding for two programs- Library Development Aid and Emergency Aid.

### **POSITIVE IMPACTS OF THE STATE BUDGET**

Even with this reduction in funding for library programs, there are several extremely positive aspects of the State Budget that are critical to strengthening local services and providing cost containment. The proposed budget retains current funding levels for three critical State Library programs. These are:

1. State Per Capita Aid Program that provides direct operational support to municipal and county libraries. State Per Capita Aid is an essential component of every local library's budget.
2. New Jersey Library Network Aid that permits the sharing of resources among the state's 2400 libraries ( school, academic, public, and corporate) through a variety of cooperative services including a shared statewide interlibrary loan system; 24 hours a day online reference assistance and a statewide delivery system. Last year, 1.5 million items were borrowed saving residents over \$52 million.
3. Virtual Aid Program that provides funding for New Jersey's 24x7 Library offering online services at libraries or to your computer at home, school or work. Virtual Library Aid expands educational resources and contains local costs. Through this program, the State Library purchases 10 online electronic databases. These databases are in key subject areas such as business, health, and education. There are also databases provided to school and academic libraries to support local resources. Purchase of these databases through a statewide contract saves New Jersey libraries over \$26 million.

The New Jersey Library community considers these programs essential; any reductions in these programs would severely impact local residents access to information.

## **II. DEBT SERVICE FOR CONSTRUCTION FUNDING**

For the first time the budget also provides over \$ 2 million for debt service to fund the \$45 million Public Library Construction Bond Act. This funding is providing a renaissance in library construction throughout the state with 68 projects going forward with funding provided by the bonds that were sold in Dec. 2002. The State Library now has a waiting list

of over 40 communities that would apply under a second round of construction funding if it were available. Two bills have been introduced to offer a second round of funding.

## **THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF THE STATE BUDGET ON LIBRARIES.**

### **ELIMINATION OF TWO PROGRAMS.**

The funding cut proposed in this budget is significant and eliminates two long established programs. The Library Development Aid program has been funded since 1985 and the Emergency Aid program since 1972. Funding has provided for the purchase of additional resources for libraries on the local level that are shared through the state's interlibrary loan system. It has also provided for the preservation of historic library resources that are in danger of deterioration because of age and neglect.

### **CONCERN THAT THE CUT WILL BECOME PERMANENT**

There is also the larger concern that this will become a permanent cut in state funding for libraries. State funding for library operational programs in the FY90 state budget was over \$16 million. State funding was cut 16% in the FY91 budget and has never been restored to the FY90 levels. So the budget you are looking at today is lower than it was 14 years ago. This, unfortunately, dramatizes the permanent nature of library funding cuts.

### **LONG TERM GOALS**

The long term goals adopted by the New Jersey Library Association will have a direct impact on library services to residents of New Jersey. We will seek to continue to strengthen 24x7 online library providing resources to every library in the state; to develop regional economic business centers; to provide our academic institutions with access to high tech information resources needed for sophisticated R & D and to provide additional funding for public library construction.

The New Jersey Library Association recognizes that this is an extremely difficult budget year. The cuts that the governor is recommending for library programs are significant. We implore that no further cuts be made by Legislation. Additional cuts would severely hamper library services to residents of New Jersey.

The support of the Legislature has been critical to the library community. We trust that you will continue to support strong library services for your residents.