



**TESTIMONY OF PATRICIA A. TUMULTY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NEW JERSEY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COMMITTEE
On S2068/A2679
OCTOBER 18, 2010**

My name is Patricia A. Tumulty and I am the Executive Director of the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA). Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The legislation you are reviewing today would bring fiscal parity for all communities which have established library service in New Jersey through a referendum process.

For over twenty years, municipal free public libraries were exempt from the “cap” legislation. When this legislation was revised in April 2007, municipal libraries were not included as a cap exemption. The 246 municipalities which support municipal and joint libraries were drastically impacted by this action. County library funding, however, which was also established by a referendum process, has always been considered a dedicated tax and listed separately on the homeowner’s tax bill. Dedicated taxes such as Open Space are exempt from the new 2% cap.

The issue, therefore, is how to establish the same process for library funding for county libraries and municipal libraries, which were both established by the public through a referendum. Unfortunately, they are currently being treated very differently. The bills you are considering today seek to rectify that situation and bring parity in how funding for municipal and county libraries are represented on a tax bill. The current process is inequitable for those who support municipal and joint libraries.

This situation must be rectified as quickly as possible. Our goal is not to have another exemption to the “cap” legislation but rather to have funding for municipal libraries listed as a dedicated tax just as the communities which support county libraries do. This would then bring fiscal parity between those communities that support municipal libraries and those that support county libraries. It is about equity for all communities. The process for county library communities and municipal library communities must be the same.

We are extremely fortunate that one of the bills you are considering today S2068 sponsored by Senator Gill and co-sponsored by Senator Cunningham which provides a dedicated line for municipal library funding has already passed the Senate 40-0 on June 28, 2010.

We are very grateful that six members of the Assembly are currently supporting companion legislation to S2068 to make municipal library funding a dedicated line. Companion bills which you are considering today are sponsored by Assemblyman Chivukula, Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttel, Assemblyman Ramos, Assemblyman Scalera, Assemblyman McKeon and Assemblywoman Handlin. Several of the sponsors have had experience in municipal government and know that this inequity has been troubling for several years.

Many members of the Assembly represent districts which support both municipal and county libraries. Without this legislative solution the inequities will continue. Let me use Assemblywoman Greenstein's district as an example. This inequity is very clear to see-municipal libraries in her district such as Hamilton Twp., Plainsboro and Monroe Twp. must include library funding under their municipal budget, however, West Windsor Twp., which supports the Mercer County Library system, does not. The reality is that currently more communities list library funding as a dedicated tax than those who do not.

The New Jersey Library Association has been trying for several years to correct this inequity. We have strong support from the New Jersey State Library for our position that municipal library funding must be considered a dedicated tax and that libraries of all types should be treated equitably in how they are represented on tax bills.

The New Jersey Library Association has worked with the League of Municipalities to resolve this issue and we are grateful for the League's support on this issue.

I urge you to support this legislative solution as quickly as possible so it can be resolved before the municipal budget process begins.