

Missouri Library Association Legislative Priorities for 2017

MLA will continue to work (fight) for the REAL Program, restoring State Aid and funding of the Non-Resident Professional Athletes & Entertainers Tax (143.183 RSMo)

With the state going into a new governorship-the Governor-Elect will begin working on the budget the day after the election to the beginning of January. It is noted that core budgets will be the 2017 appropriated amounts, plus all mandated expenditures, and will not be appropriated amounts minus withholds.

MLA's message must be that this appropriated level is the minimum that should be appropriated. We must hold the core budget amount and not lose any. We would prefer to see increases over the core amounts.

Remote Electronic Access for Libraries (REAL) Program: MLA continues its support for all funding requests for the REAL Program which provides Internet connectivity and managed bandwidth for public libraries and statewide information databases for all Missouri libraries. This program allows all Missouri communities to stand on a more equal footing, provide equal access to learning materials, small business resources, and other essential information not otherwise available in this high of a quality. Missouri and Missourians need this program to stay competitive with our neighboring states and in the world economy. It cannot be emphasized enough that the cuts to REAL Program and other funding are making it so that we are just meeting our Maintenance of Effort (MOE) for LSTA.

Non-Resident Professional Athletes and Entertainers Tax (A&E Tax):

This is a tax on the earnings of professional athletes and entertainers when playing or performing in the State of Missouri. It is collected by the State of Missouri and, by Statute, is to be distributed among the following five groups: **Missouri State Library Networking Fund, (10%), Missouri Humanities Council Trust Fund (10%); Missouri Public Television Broadcasting Corporation Special Fund (10%); Missouri Historic Preservation Revolving Fund (10%) and the Missouri Arts Council Trust Fund (60%).**

The 10% of the A&E funds distributed to public libraries is to purchase books and other library materials.

MLA, Librarians, and Trustees continue to push for full funding to be appropriated to the Missouri State Library Networking Fund for public libraries and the other qualifying agencies at the levels outlined in the Statutes. The amount of funds available should also be based upon the actual amount collected as reported by the Missouri Department of Revenue. MLA will oppose any attempts to allow groups to dilute the cultural partner's allocations.

State Aid for Public Libraries: MLA will support, the appropriation request of the Secretary of State or an appropriation that would result in as much as 55-cent per capita state aid plus an appropriate amount for equalization as was appropriated in FY 2015.

NOTE: FY 2015 appropriations were \$3,504,001, which was paid as \$.50 per capita, and the rest as Equalization funds. REAL Program FY15 was \$3,109,250.

"MLA will adopt the position that libraries require state funding because of the community services they provide and to equalize funding between well-funded and under-funded libraries." This is in answer to the question of why libraries should receive state support and not be local efforts.

Missouri can't afford to neglect developing the talent of all of its young people, whether they live in low-income or other challenged parts of the state. Today's and tomorrow's jobs require not just skills in the STEM disciplines, but the ability to innovate, create, and solve problems. All children need access to good public libraries that have the resources to foster the development of their imagination and creativity. Even those who live in well-funded districts are affected by libraries that are not well-funded. We are all Missourians. Libraries engage in community services that impact state numbers and that impacts how others view us as a state.

- Libraries are career centers for job hunters and when they become employed citizens, the state's welfare and unemployment numbers go down.
- Libraries are safe havens for teens. When teens are at the library, they are not vandalizing or worse and the state's crime statistics go down.
- Libraries are strong advocates of early literacy programs. Study after study shows that reading to children from birth produces readers and writers. Those readers go to school and excel on state tests. The outcome? The state scores more highly when compared to other states.
- Libraries provide resources to home schooling families. Not everyone can afford their own materials when they choose to home school but with the library's help, that choice is made easier. The library is there to provide materials to homeschooling families and offsets the cost of educating one's own children. Homeschooling is not just for the rich. We all benefit when libraries have equalized funding because we are all impacted by state numbers. Providing equalization funding makes us all look good.
- Libraries provide important educational opportunities in learning new technologies. There are very few places where library patrons can get the support, and at no cost to them, that they need regardless of where they are on the digital learning scale. Learning how to use new technologies goes hand-in-hand with the job search process.
- Libraries allow Internet use to anyone visiting, regardless of where they live. The ability to visit the public library in any town you happen to be visiting and ask to use the Internet speaks well of our state. This of course plays also into funding for MOREnet.

MLA will support the Missouri State Library and its mission

The Missouri State Library promotes the development and improvement of library services throughout the state, provides direct library and information service in support of the executive and legislative branches of Missouri state government and strives to ensure all Missourians have equal access to library services.

MLA will support the Secretary's Council on Library Development through attendance and input to council as well as support for the Council's mission statement.

MLA will advise the Secretary of State and the State Librarian on all matters that relate to the state's libraries and library service to Missouri citizens; to recommend programs to the Secretary of State and the State Librarian; and to communicate the value of libraries to people in the state and to those who are responsible for libraries.

MLA will monitor the appropriation requests of the Secretary of State

Missouri State Library: This funding covers staffing/programs of the Missouri State Library, library development and consultant services to libraries in the State as well as the following programs:

MLA supports the programs of the Missouri State Library, which are supported through core funding to the Missouri Secretary of State's Office. Significantly, core funding supports Wolfner Talking Book and Braille Library, the Missouri Census Data Center, Summer Reading Programs, and the Missouri Digital Heritage Initiative. Each of these programs contributes in unique ways to the education of Missouri citizens. MLA supports other programs included in the Missouri State Library appropriations including the administration of federal grants.

MLA supports adequate assistance for The State Historical Society of Missouri in Columbia. The State Historical Society houses the Missouri newspaper collection as well as a collection of materials relating to Missouri's heritage. These resources are very valuable to our state and must be preserved.

MLA will monitor all property tax legislation.

Local property taxes, both real estate and personal property, are the primary funding source of Missouri's public libraries. Percentages may vary from library to library, but it is not unusual for a library to have over 90% of its annual income being derived from property taxes.

While public schools and local community colleges are not as dependent on property taxes as public libraries, these institutions still receive a portion of their income from these taxes.

Any legislation that attempts to lower property taxes or do away with them would adversely affect Missouri's public libraries and could also have a negative effect on school and community college libraries.

For this reason, MLA will monitor all property tax legislation and make members of the Missouri General Assembly aware of how specific pieces of legislation affects library service in Missouri. MLA supports efforts to establish methods to fairly assess real and personal property.

In addition, MLA will monitor any legislation that attempts to aid assessors in property assessments. MLA will study cost versus the benefits of any proposed legislation as well as any Hancock Amendment implications.

MLA supports alternative funding sources

MLA will support legislation that attempts to provide a diversification of revenue from alternative sources (including, but not limited to sales tax) from state and local options.

MLA will continue to monitor all legislation dealing with Tax Increment Financing (TIFs), Chapter 100 RSMo, Chapter 353 RSMo, enterprise zones, enhanced enterprise zones, and tax abatements and the effects of the implementation of such legislation. MLA will oppose new programs or changes to existing programs that divert tax revenue from libraries.

Economic development and growth is vital to the State of Missouri and to local communities. However, there are concerns when incentives offered to developers and new industries include the new tax revenue that would go to local taxing entities.

Under TIFs and tax abatement, developers use the funds that would normally pay the property taxes on new developments to cover costs associated with the project. This means that taxing entities are not receiving property taxes on the new development because the funds are being diverted.

When TIFs and tax abatements are used to finance commercial developments, some of the entities having their tax incomes diverted do receive additional new income from the sales tax generated by the development. Most public libraries, along with other entities such as fire and ambulance districts, do not receive sales tax. Therefore, these districts must wait until the TIF or tax abatement is retired before any financial benefit is received. In many cases, the wait can be many years, including the statutory limit of twenty-three years. However, it is not unusual for a major commercial entity to file for a new development and a new set of incentives just as the old package is preparing to expire.

Because of the effect TIFs and tax abatements can have on the funding of public libraries and other property tax supported political subdivisions, MLA monitors any proposed legislation in these areas. It is the position of MLA that these laws should be more restrictive regarding eligibility requirements for developments.

MLA will examine and support that legislation which strengthens public library districts' status as political subdivisions and will monitor all legislation pertaining to the governance of libraries.

It is important that all public library districts be strong and independent regardless of their type of library district. MLA believes that a local library's Board of Trustees should make the policy decisions regarding all library services. Missouri's public libraries have been encouraged to adopt their own policies regarding Internet usage and filtering, content selection, collection development and the location of materials within a library. These local policies will take into consideration the community needs of that library district.

MLA will closely monitor any proposed legislation relating to the boundaries between municipal library districts and county library districts (referred to as the '65 law) as well as proposals relating to broadening the library sub-district law.

Any legislation that relates to the governance of political subdivisions shall be studied by the MLA Legislative Committee to determine its effect upon libraries. This includes proposed legislation relating to Chapter 182 (County and City Libraries – Libraries).

MLA believes that a local library board is frequently in the best position to determine the most appropriate action for their community's library. Consequently, MLA will oppose legislation that attempts to create a statewide solution or policy when it is better to leave such policymaking to each individual library district.

MLA will continue to monitor legislative activities and court actions related to the Hancock Amendment and other proposals related to state revenue/expenditures limitations.

The Hancock Amendment (Article X, Sections 16 to 24 of the Constitution of Missouri) deals with revenue limitations including limits on the amount of taxes the legislature may impose as well as the setting of tax levies and fees by all political subdivisions in the State. Any legislation related to The Hancock Amendment has an effect upon all tax supported political subdivisions. Institutions such as the Missouri State Library, universities, public libraries, school districts and community colleges all rely very heavily on tax-generated revenues.

MLA closely monitors any proposal relating to placing limitations on state revenues and state expenditures or proposals affecting any state funds that benefit libraries.

MLA will continue to build coalitions with political subdivisions that have similar interests in legislation and funding.

Many of the issues that are of concern to librarians as well as trustees and friends also affect other political subdivisions in the State. By working together, MLA and other groups will increase awareness of these concerns and needs.