

LIBRARIES



GETTING AMERICA BACK TO WORK

**A LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL
TO SAVE LIBRARIES
AND HELP JOB SEEKERS**



DECEMBER 2009

LIBRARIES: On the Front Lines of Helping the Unemployed and Small Business

- There are more than 16,000 public libraries in the United States most of which provide access to job/career information and resources. This is compared to roughly 1,800 “One-Stop” Career Centers under the Workforce Investment Act. In fact, these centers often refer customers to their local libraries for additional job search assistance.
- A 2009 ALA study found that aiding job seekers is increasingly viewed as a critical role for public libraries with 62.2 percent of libraries reporting this service as critical to the library’s mission – up from 44 percent one year earlier.
- At the beginning of 2009, 90 percent of libraries offered licensed databases for resume writing, interview techniques, practice examinations for GED, certificate-required professions, company profiles, information on occupations and industries, business plan development, and homework help.
- At the beginning of 2009, 90 percent of libraries offered formal technology classes or assistance for patrons using library computers. Classes range from general computer skills to software use to online job-seeking and career-related information.
- In 2007, there were 208,000 computer terminals available for public use in libraries.
- American households reported using their public libraries more often in 2009: 25.4 million Americans used public libraries more than 20 times in the last year, up from 20.3 million in 2006.
- For many small businesses, the library provides research resources and specially trained staff they could not otherwise afford. In a growing number of communities, libraries are opening business branches offering specialized collections, providing business-specific training in discerning credible research, developing a business plan, identifying required licenses and taxes, grant opportunities as well as assisting with business development initiatives.

LIBRARIES: Despite Their Importance – Budgets Are Being Slashed

Libraries are being swept into a perfect storm. Lines are heading out the door as more people come into the library to use the computers and learn how to submit job applications online while funding cuts are forcing libraries to close earlier and reduce staff.

- State Library Agencies reported in November 2009 that 77 percent of states cut funds that support local public libraries, which has meant layoffs, staff furloughs and forced retirements. This has caused a 75 percent cut in services to the public including canceled statewide databases used for job searching, homework help, and cuts in 24/7 reference, which is used by small businesses and students.
- 50 percent of state libraries have reported that budget cuts have resulted in a reduction of direct services to the public. Impacts include regional library closures, furlough days (which have caused library closures), reduction in service hours, and a reduction in public access to computers.
- America's libraries are facing budget cuts in direct state and local funding, plus losses in support from state library agencies that dramatically impact their ability to serve the public. As of May 2009, more than half of all states that provide state funding to public libraries reported cuts in this funding in fiscal year 2009 – in some cases as much as 30 percent. More cuts are likely in fiscal year 2010.

Just a few of the many examples of budget cuts include:

- *In Anne Arundel County, Md., libraries are getting cut by \$1.4 million in county funding and will have to close the county's 15 libraries on Sundays and reduce the hours for part-time employees.*
- *Hawaii will close 51 of its libraries for 15 days through mid-May in 2010*
- *Seattle Public Library announced that all branches would be closed for a week, as part of a citywide budget-cutting plan.*
- *In Aurora, Colo., the City Council made deep cuts in library services for 2010. The council agreed to cut about 135 positions for 2010, with about 50 of those positions now filled. The rest were vacant. About 40 people who work at libraries will be laid off, and four of the seven libraries will be closed.*

A Legislative Proposal to Save Libraries and Help Job Seekers

By providing a one-time \$650 million investment to libraries, distributed through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), up to 13,000 library jobs can be created in a matter of months.

These jobs would be specifically targeted for library positions focused on assisting patrons with getting back to work – thereby having the impact of assisting literally millions of Americans find employment.

How it would work:

Distribution of Funds

- These funds would be distributed in a clear, concise, affirmative manner. Funds would be distributed to states using a formula based 50 percent on population and 50 percent on relative unemployment (similar to the Department of Labor's Dislocated Worker Program).
- At the State level, the Chief State Library Officer would be responsible for distributing funds to local public libraries based on a similar formula.
- In the areas of need, a minimum amount of funding per library could offer at least one library staff job per building based upon need and a maximum of five full-time staff.

Use of Funds

- Funds would be limited to hiring back staff released due to budget cuts, recruiting new staff and/or expanding staff services around job searching and employment skills training.

Maintenance of Effort

- Any grant made shall only be used for the library and no portion of any grant made under this appropriation shall revert to the general fund of a municipality nor shall any grant be used to reduce the library's appropriation.

Proposed Statutory Language

INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES

For an additional amount for “public libraries” for necessary expenses related to economic recovery efforts, \$650,000,000, to remain available until expended: *Provided*, That the Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services is directed to distribute funds to each State library administrative agency pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 9131(b) [State Allotments] except that 50 percent of the funds as described under 20. U.S.C. 9131(b)(2), [Remainder] shall be based upon the relative number of unemployed individuals in each State, compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in all States;

Provided further, each State library administrative agency shall distribute its share of funds received under this section, to local public libraries using a formula consistent with an existing State formula used for the allocation of funds to public libraries, except such formula shall be modified to ensure that 50 percent of the funds are based upon the relative number of unemployed individuals in the service area or county in which it is located;

Provided further, such formula shall ensure a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5 library staff member(s) per building, paid at a level not to exceed the average FTE salary for such position within that jurisdiction;

Provided further, the use of funds under this section shall be limited to hiring new staff or hiring back staff released due to budget cuts prior to the date of enactment of this Act and such staff shall have as a primary function to provide activities tied to assisting individuals into employment or related to job creation, including but not limited to reinstating or supplementing evening and weekend hours of operation at public libraries to provide greater access to employment services; expanding critical employment activities and services at public libraries such as résumé development, job bank web searches, and workshops on career information; as well as small business development activities;

Provided further, no funds provided under this section shall revert to a State or municipality nor shall funds be used to directly or indirectly reduce a library’s previous year’s funding level.

Attachment

Even in These Tough Economic Times, the Public Wants Library Services

Media Reports on Public Support for Libraries

In Colton, Calif., the *San Bernardino County Sun* reported on November 25, 2009:

On Nov. 11, the city closed its two branch libraries and homework assistance center and issued layoff notices to nearly 60 employees as cost cutting measures to combat a projected \$5 million deficit for June 30 close of the 2009-10 fiscal year.

At a Nov. 17 city council meeting, nearly two dozen people spoke against the closure of the libraries. In response, the council said they would direct city staff to restore some level of library service.

The city will reopen the main and Luque branch libraries on a limited schedule, officials announced Wednesday.

In Jacksonville, Fla., the *Florida Times-Union* reported on September 18, 2009:

No Jacksonville library branches will have their hours cut under a tentative budget approved by the City Council that also includes setting the property tax rate at 9.27 mills, the maximum allowable.

During about an hour of public comment at the beginning of the meeting, several people asked that library hours not be cut.

The library budget was restored during Thursday night's special council meeting, the first time the full council discussed the budget.

In St. Paul, Minn., the *Star Tribune* reported on August 20, 2009:

With an exhibit about hometown author F. Scott Fitzgerald as a backdrop, Mayor Chris Coleman pledged Wednesday that St. Paul would keep its public libraries open despite strains on the city budget.

Coleman, in a library budget address at the downtown Central Library, described St. Paul as an "incredibly literate community" that depends on its libraries in good times and in bad.

Coleman also reaffirmed that Hamline Midway Library would stay open because of a vigorous defense from residents who didn't want it closed. Last spring, neighbors rallied to save that branch library, which opened in 1930. The city had considered closing the library to save about \$350,000 a year.

In Brooklyn, N.Y., the *Daily News* reported on June 17, 2009:

The mayor's proposed budget threatened the Brooklyn Library with a \$17.5 million cut – which would have forced hours to be slashed to just 25 a week, with no library service on Saturdays. The deal worked out with the City Council restored that money.

Under a deal struck by Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council Monday night, neighborhood branches will remain open six days a week.

Council Libraries Committee Chairman Vincent Gentile (D-Bay Ridge) said officials were deluged with 8,000 signatures opposing the cuts.

Media Quotes

- 1/3/09 *Boston Globe* columnist, Derrick Z. Jackson wrote that public libraries nationwide were posting double-digit percentage increases in circulation and new library-card applications.
- 1/15/09 *Wall Street Journal* reporter Jim Carlton wrote that libraries nationwide had reported jumps in attendance of as much as 65 percent over the past year as newly unemployed people flocked to branches to fill out resumes and scan ads for job listings.
- 2/2/09, the CBS Evening News reported that 18 million people had visited Los Angeles public libraries in 2008 – 2 million more than in 2007. Many were recently unemployed and coming for help: every computer terminal was being used, and librarians had become job counselors.
- 2/28/09 *Washington Post* reported that D.C. resident Judith Theodore “scrambles daily between public libraries in the District so that the oldest of her three children has access to a computer to do his homework, and she can search for a job.”
- 2/28/09 National Public Radio aired a piece on “What’s New at the Library? Financial Advice” and CNN broadcast a report that noted that “libraries across the country have seen dramatic increases in the use of their services, which in addition to free Internet access can include resume workshops and foreclosure seminars.”
- 6/14/09 *Baltimore Sun* reports that “Since the onset of the recession, attendance at the Enoch Pratt Free Library’s career center classes has jumped 92 percent ... the rise in attendance is nearly in synch with the city’s rise in unemployment.”
- 9/2/09 *USA Today* reported on job seekers flocking to public libraries which means there are long waits for computer terminals ... eight out of 10 libraries have someone on a computer waiting list at some point during the day.
- 10/4/09 *New York Times* had a story about the libraries in New Jersey are acting as lifelines for thousands of unemployed as they look for jobs online.

- 10/21/09 *Connecticut Post Online* reported on the greater demand on libraries during this rough economy, increasing their career resources and workshops.
- 10/22/09 *Dallas Morning News* reported on how libraries are helping with job hunting ... “across the Dallas area, librarians are doubling as job counselors and libraries are finding new customers. The trend echoes around the nation ...”