

- P R E S S R E L E A S E -
Clermont County Public Library

326 Broadway Street • Batavia, OH 45103
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Proposed Budget Reductions & Tax Reforms Threaten Services at Ohio's Public Libraries

For Immediate Release 3/4/2005:

In February, Governor Taft introduced his fiscal year budget for 2006-2007. The budget, once again, includes a proposal to reduce funding for public libraries. If passed, for the Clermont County Public Library this would result in a cut of over one quarter of a million dollars due to a 5% reduction in the Library and Local Government Support Fund (LLGSF). Approximately 79% of Clermont County Public Library's funding comes from this fund, which is based on a percentage of the State of Ohio personal income tax collection.

In addition to the reduction in funding, other proposals at the state level could impact library funding. One such proposal is a tax reform plan proposed by Governor Taft that includes a 21% across-the-board cut in personal income taxes. The LLGSF receives 5.7% of the personal income collection in Ohio. Tax reform that includes a reduction in personal income taxes may result in further reduction in library funding.

Along with funding that has fallen 8.5% since 2001, as well as costs that continue to rise, the proposed cut and reforms, if enacted, would have an adverse impact on library services that have already been considerably streamlined.

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Services that could be in jeopardy in the future if funding continues to decrease include:

- Service hours may have to be reduced at all branch locations. The Library may not be as convenient as it once was.
- There may be fewer resources (such as books, DVDs, videos and CDs). As the collection ages, the Library will be less able to provide up-to-date information. Gaps in the collection will grow and these missing materials will quickly become unavailable.
- There could be fewer and more obsolete computers. As aging equipment fails but cannot be replaced, fewer computers will be available resulting in longer lines to access the Library's catalog or the Internet. The computers that are available may not be able to address the technology needs of our users.
- There would be fewer staff members available to assist customers with checkouts and searches for materials and information.
- With less staff the library may be forced to reduce the number of programs like storytimes, family programs, summer reading activities and computer training that we do.

Last year, the Clermont County Public Library circulated 1.8 million items for use in the home or area classrooms and we answered over half a million questions

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for our library users. We provided free Internet access for an estimated 750 people a day at all 10 branch locations in Clermont County, which was especially needed in the smaller communities. in the county. Our youth services staff provided outreach programming to over 22,400 school children, and we offered over 3,497 free programs designed to encourage lifelong learning.

At a time when state leaders are struggling to find a way to equitably educate our children, it is counter-productive to take away support from one of the most important learning centers in the community, Ohio public libraries. Failure to adequately fund public libraries will have a ripple effect through the entire community with a particularly adverse impact on education, public access to technology and lifelong learning. Anything less than current funding levels would have a serious impact on services like these, and many others that so significantly benefit the community.

How Can the Public Help? Act now. Time is of the essence. The State House of Representatives will conclude hearings on the budget on March 17, take a two-week Easter recess, then return on April 4 to introduce their substitute proposal. Since the proposed budget and reforms will soon be voted on, the Clermont County Public Library is asking supporters to urge county legislators to preserve library funding. The best ways to reach them (in order of their preferences) are by email, telephone and letter. Legislators also need to hear from voters in their constituencies about the benefits of the Library. Contact information is available

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at www.clermont.lib.oh.us and, for a detailed explanation of the current budget proposals, visit the Ohio Library Council's website at www.olc.org/protectlibraryfunding.asp .

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