RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The Commission will address the current State Library funding.
August 13, 2013

TO: CLA MEMBERS/ SYSTEMS/ NETWORK CONTACTS

FROM: Mike Dillon, CLA Lobbyist
Christina DiCaro, CLA Lobbyist

RE: News From the Capitol

I. LEGISLATURE RETURNS FROM SUMMER RECESS

The Assembly returned from their month-long Summer Recess on August 5th, and the Senate returned yesterday from their recess. There is still no clear explanation – aside from politics – as to why the houses took staggered recesses this year, but because of the overlap, the Senate wrapped up their policy committee hearings of Assembly bills before they departed in July. Yesterday the Senate heard approximately 190 measures in its fiscal committee, Senate Appropriations, which took the committee proceedings into the early evening.

In the next few weeks, with both houses in session, legislators and Capitol staff will have just a short window to conclude hearing bills in various committees, as the legislative deadlines are quickly approaching and the 2013 Session will officially conclude at midnight on September 13th. These next few weeks are notoriously the most harried time in Sacramento all year, with last minute proposals, infamous “gut and amends,” rule waivers, and committee hearings often lasting late into the evenings. The final two weeks of the Session are reserved for Floor Sessions only, when the Houses will convene daily to consider all of the remaining measures, most of which will reach the Governor for his consideration. The Governor will have until October 13th to act on the many bills sent to him in the final days of Session.

II. LEGISLATIVE SUCCESS AT CAPITOL DEPENDS ON YOUR PARTICIPATION IN STATE LIBRARY BROADBAND STUDY

As your lobbyists, we would like to make a special appeal to all public library directors who recently received a memo and survey from Acting State Librarian, Gerry Maginnity. The State Librarian is requesting your participation in a critically important statewide broadband assessment, by jurisdiction and branch, and we would like to stress the importance of your participation. The information being collected by the State Library is being requested by the State Legislature in order to assess whether or not state funding for broadband connection should be provided to public libraries in the 2014-15 Budget. We can’t stress enough how critical it is to have a strong rate of participation in this survey so that the legislature fully understands the connection challenges and lack of broadband strength at many California libraries. Even if your library enjoys strong broadband strength now, there are more and more imminent pressures that will impact your existing service with the launch of the Affordable Care Act this Fall, the GED test going online shortly, employers requiring job applications to be filled out online, or veterans needing computers to apply for benefits, not to mention the many patrons who come into the library with their own “tablets,” looking to use the Wifi.

This year, you will recall, CLA fought to get state funding into the 2013-14 Budget for the purpose of connecting all public library outlets to a high-speed, broadband “backbone,” operated by CENIC (the Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California). Originally, $2.25 million in funding was included in the Budget by the Budget Conference Committee, but when the legislature negotiated final numbers with the Governor, he requested that millions of dollars in augmentations be stricken in order to balance the state Budget – including the money requested by CLA. The legislature, however, did include language in the Budget
bill that requires the State Library to conduct a broadband infrastructure assessment and to provide a report to the Department of Finance, the Legislative Analyst, and the Budget Subcommittees on Education Finance.

We have been very impressed with the effort of Gerry Maginnity and Jarrid Keller at the State Library and the other folks they are working with as they embark on this endeavor. Their survey is comprehensive and will provide much needed data for the legislature and the Governor’s Department of Finance. Additionally, the State Library has been conducting a series of webinars that walk library directors and other interested parties through the process, and they offer the assistance of a “Help Desk,” to work through various questions you may have.

What we heard, time and time again from the legislature, as we lobbied this issue this past year with our colleagues at CENIC and the State Library, was that there is support for the concept of providing funding to public libraries for this purpose – but the data must support our contentions. Please, take a minute today to help us make this broadband survey a big success by completing the application provided to you by the State Library.

III. ADULT EDUCATION RESTRUCTURING – OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES TO PARTICIPATE IN “CONSORTIUMS” TO PROVIDE LITERACY SERVICES

There have been some inquiries regarding a $25 million item contained in the 2013-14 Budget for adult education restructuring, and whether or not public libraries would be eligible for any of that funding for their adult literacy programs. In his January Budget, the Governor indicated a need to coordinate efforts between K-12 school districts and community colleges for the provision of Adult Education programs, but there was also an acknowledgement by the Governor that many adult education programs have been eliminated. The January Budget proposed an increase of $300 million to community colleges, arguing that they were better positioned to address the needs of adult learners. However, concerns were raised with the timing and the structure of the proposal and the Governor subsequently decided to maintain the status quo for existing adult education programs for 2 years.

Instead, in the Governor’s “May Revision” of the Budget, he suggested that $30 million be provided for “two year planning and implementation grants,” for adult education restructuring, which was reduced by the legislature to $25 million and signed into law by the Governor. Of important note: this money is Proposition 98 funding, which means that it is only eligible to be directly distributed to K-12 school districts and community colleges. In other words, public libraries are not directly eligible for this funding. However, the legislature did adopt the concept of “regional consortiums” which would be jointly operated by districts and community colleges but which could also include other providers such as workforce investment boards, local correctional facilities, and other local public entities such as libraries and community based organizations.

We have had several conversations with Paul Steenhausen, the author of a Legislative Analyst’s Office report entitled, “Restructuring California’s Adult Education System” (Dec. 5, 2012) and he stresses that it would be incumbent upon libraries, individually, to approach their local community colleges and K-12 districts and offer their services as an adult literacy provider, etc. in order to create a collaborative relationship. The public library then, would be considered a contractor with the community college or K-12 district and could be eligible for funding.

As additional information becomes available, we will keep you informed.