CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LIBRARY COMMISSION
AGENDA ATTACHMENT 3

MEETING DATE: Thursday, January 22, 2015
AGENDA ITEM #: 11A
ITEM: STATE LIBRARY FUNDING ISSUES

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Commissioners will address the State Library funding.
TO: CLA MEMBERS/ SYSTEMS/ NETWORK CONTACTS

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

RE: News From the Capitol

GOVERNOR BROWN INTRODUCES 2015-16 BUDGET: SLASHES $4 MILLION FROM PUBLIC LIBRARY PROGRAMS

This morning Governor Brown introduced his 2015-16 State Budget before an assembly of the press corps in the State Capitol in Sacramento. The Governor’s Budget summary document, released in conjunction with the Budget indicates that “the state budget, after a decade of fiscal turbulence, is finally balanced – more precariously than I would like – but balanced.” While the Governor’s Budget gives most of any new revenue, gained due to an slowly recovering economy, to K-12 schools, he also proposes new spending in areas of public safety, health and human services, and climate change. However, most disappointing, the Governor slashes $4 million from the State Library Budget – money which was included last year in the Budget to bolster the California Library Services Act, the State Literacy program, and so-called “hardship” grants for those libraries needing to connect to the new high-speed Internet backbone operated by the Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California (CENIC).

While this news is understandably disappointing, California library supporters have a history of rising to the occasion, and there is no doubt they will do so again with a valiant fight this Spring on these issues. In fact, you will be hearing from the CLA Legislative Committee in the coming days as they launch this year’s major advocacy event, “Day In the District.” Your participation will be critical as CLA begins a concerted effort to restore these funds. CLA members will recall that last year, Assemblyman Mike Gatto (D-Los Angeles) fought to include funding in the 2014-15 Budget to help restore money to the California Library Services Act and the state literacy program. The Assemblyman had met with the library directors, staff and supporters in Burbank in his district, and learned of the impacts the devastating Budget cuts had had on the Transaction Based Reimbursement program and other vital programs. In working with CLA, Assemblyman Gatto vowed to make partial restoration of public library funds one of his priorities last year. Along with Assembly Budget Chair, Nancy Skinner and Assembly Budget Subcommittee Chair, Al Muratsuchi, the three of them championed the issue, resulting in $3 million in new funding being included in the Budget ultimately sent to the Governor. We hope that Mr. Gatto and many of our library supporters in the legislature will again lead the effort to restore this funding as the Budget Committees begin their deliberations on the Governor’s Budget this Spring.

Specifically, the Governor’s Budget does the following:

- California Library Services Act: Makes a $2 million reduction in this line-item. (The so-called “Gatto money.”) This leaves $1.88 million in the fund.
- California Library Literacy Services: Makes a $1 million reduction in this line-item. (The so-called “Gatto money.”) This leaves $2.8 million in the fund.
- CENIC “Hardship Grants:” Zeroes out the $1 million in “hardship grant” funding but leaves $2.25 million in place to fund the Governor’s broadband plan for libraries (e.g. connecting public libraries to the CENIC high-speed “backbone.”)

Adult Education Plan is rolled out – benefit to public libraries unknown
It should be noted that as essential funds were cut from the literacy program this morning, the Governor’s action could negatively impact any forward progress CLA was making in the area of adult education literacy services. Over the past two months, CLA has been working with the Department of Finance as the Administration has been reviewing the current adult education program and the local consortia process. CLA was asked to provide examples regarding the heavy population of low literate adults that are seen on a regular basis at the public library – many of whom are not eligible for traditional adult education classes because their literacy level is not sufficient for enrollment. We have also been meeting with the State Board of Education and the Legislative Analyst’s Office, educating them about the issue as well. One of CLA’s goals in these meetings was to encourage the state to request that local adult education consortia recognize public libraries as a viable provider and a resource and to include them in local decision-making and referrals. Subsequent to these meetings, CLA Legislative Committee Chair Laura Seaholm and literacy liaison to the committee, Joanne Wright, polled the literacy community to get essential feedback that was also provided to the Department of Finance and the Legislative Analyst’s Office.

Today’s Budget includes a major $500 million Proposition 98 General Fund block grant proposal pertaining to Adult Education which states in part:

“In order for adult education programs to be well coordinated and linked with the economic needs of their region, the Administration proposes that each consortium designate an allocation board responsible for planning and allocating block grant funds. Each consortium will form an allocation committee consisting of seven members who represent community colleges, K-12 districts, other education providers, local workforce investment boards, county social services departments, correctional rehabilitation programs, and one public member with relevant expertise. Each allocation committee will coordinate with regional partners to ensure various adult education funding streams are integrated, such as block grant funds, other K-12 and community college resources, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act allocations, and other federal funds. Each allocation committee will determine how to allocate block grant funds for direct instruction, support services, and administration of its consortium (which will be capped at 5 percent). Each consortium will report annually to the Chancellor and Superintendent on progress towards fulfilling its adult education plan using all resources available. These reports will inform distribution of block grant funds in the future.”

Funding will be provided directly to K-12 districts, according to the Governor’s plan in the initial year of the program, but then after that time “further allocations will be distributed according to the local allocation committees.” However, it is unclear if public libraries will ultimately be able to benefit from the block grant funds.

We will be participating in a briefing by the Department of Finance next week as they explain, in greater detail the adult education proposal. We will provide CLA members with supplemental information as this issue progresses.

As mentioned above, your local advocacy efforts – reaching out to your legislators during the month of February – will be absolutely critical this year. Look for an announcement in the coming days from the CLA Legislative Committee regarding this year’s “Day In the District” advocacy event and plan to participate. CLA will provide you with information and tools you will need in order to express your concerns with your local legislators about today’s action by the Governor.
LEGISLATIVE MEETING NOTES
DECEMBER 1, 2014
Prepared by Alan B. Smith

NOTE: These meeting took place prior to the legislator take their oath of office.

Senate:
Lois Wolk, District XX
- Lois and I met for over 10 minutes in her office. We were joined by Michael Erke (Legislative Director) who took notes. I thanked her on behalf of the Contra Costa Co. Library Commission for carrying SCA7. It sounded doubtful that she would try a similar measure this session. However, she said there will be an education bond in 2016 and perhaps it could include libraries.

- She was agreeable to consider increasing library funding as we discussed Mike Gatto’s letter (see below). She needs to wait to see who the budget chair will be. She does not want that position.

- We also discussed the need to increase the staff for the state library and BTBL. It was explained that staff cuts have made it so the BTBL is not able to conduct as much out reach as needed to those who are eligible for their services. This same message was included in the other meetings.

Assembly
Jim Frazier, District 11
- We had a pleasant chat and he said he would again support increasing library funding. He is quite willing to consider an increase in staff for BTBL. He asked for a “white paper” with the back ground etc. which I said I would get for him.

Tony Thurmond District 15
- This was my first time to meet Tony. Many of his supporters were in the room. Two of them said that yes he supports libraries and one said that if he did not, she would not have worked on his campaign. Another one is a board member of the El Cerrito library foundation. I was able to briefly explain the need to increase library funding and BTBL staffing.

Susan Bonilla District 14
- As always Susan is supportive of libraries and will consider the staff increase request.
Catherine Baker District 16

- In our long discussion prior to the primary, she said she strongly supports libraries. I talked with her COS about increased funding and BTBL staffing. She will update the assembly woman.

Mike Gatto District 43

- I met with Senior Legislative Aid Katrina Robertson. On behalf of the Contra Costa Co. library commission I asked her to express our thanks to Mike for his letter (cosigned by 10 other assembly members including Bonilla) requesting an additional $10 million for libraries this past year. It resulted in an additional $3 million.

- We also discussed the need to increase BTBL staffing. She wrote BTBL on my card and said she would convey the request. As we were finishing she thanked me for coming and said it is so unusual that anyone ever says thanks for what the assembly member does. She was truly pleased.

The bottom line is that all the meetings were positive, and in many of them we also discussed the need for increased literacy funding as I shared the figures that Greg Lucas gave at CLA.