

California Library Association

“Day in the District” Talking Points – 2023

State Budget

For the past two years, Governor Newsom and the California State Legislature have had the benefit of working with unprecedented levels of state surpluses when crafting the annual state budgets. The surpluses allowed them to invest in a myriad of projects such as housing and homelessness, wildfire mitigation, energy, healthcare, and others. CLA was the beneficiary of those surpluses, with the Governor and Legislature investing an historic level of \$500 million plus in funding for public libraries in 2021-22. \$439 million of that amount was dedicated to public library infrastructure grants to address California’s aging libraries, deferred maintenance and renovations, serious ADA compliance issues, and more. In the 2022-23 Budget year, the Governor and legislature agreed to provide an additional \$50 million for library construction grants. This combined \$489 million in grant funding, far exceeds the last successful library construction bond bill, that was sponsored by CLA and approved by the voters, in the amount of \$350 million.

Now, facing a depressed economy, California state legislators and Governor Newsom will be grappling this year with how to address a \$25 billion state Budget shortfall during the 2023 legislative session. The early expressed goal of legislative leaders and the Governor is to protect as many of the Budget commitments as possible that were made in the two preceding Budget years so that the Governor and Budget Committees do not have to go back in and make sizeable cuts to critical programs. The Governor has proposed deferring or delaying funding in several major areas in order for the state to address the Budget challenge.

One such proposal is to delay the funding of the next round of library construction grants – \$100 million in new dollars that was intended for this 2023-24 Budget year – by not approving the funds this year. Instead, the Governor proposes to award \$33 million of the funding in Budget year 2024-25, another \$33 million in 2025-26, and the final \$34 million in 2026-27. **CLA has sent a letter to the Governor indicating that the association appreciates the Governor’s steadfast leadership and support of public libraries. The letter also thanks him and the legislature for the continued attention to construction funding in the Budget. Finally, CLA acknowledges the Budget challenges that lie ahead and notes that if there is an uptick in the state’s revenue before this year’s Budget is approved, CLA would appreciate if the Governor and Legislature could provide the first installment of \$33 million in library construction grants in this Budget year, 2023-24.**

In addition to conveying the above sentiment to your legislators during “Day in the District” meetings, it is also important to let them know that CLA is concerned about any attempts to claw back funding for vital programs such as “Lunch at the Library,” the purchasing of online job training and workforce development subscriptions that are available to patrons at libraries, and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library funding – all of which were beneficiaries of significant funding in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 State Budgets. Please encourage your legislator to protect existing public library funding in the 2023-24 State Budget. The public library funding issues are heard in Senate Budget Subcommittee #1 on Education Finance and Assembly Budget Subcommittee #2 on Education Finance.