

June 22, 2009

The Honorable [full name]  
Ohio House of Representatives  
[address]  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Representative [last name]:

As president of the Ohio Library Council, which represents Ohio's 251 public libraries and the citizens they serve, I urge you to reject Governor Strickland's proposal to slash Ohio's public library funding in order to balance the state's 2010-2011 budget.

The Governor's plan singles out the state's Public Library Fund for cuts far beyond the relative reductions in state revenues and is more than double the reductions projected by the Ohio Department of Taxation.

Analysis shows that the Strickland budget cuts would reduce library funding by at least 47% in fiscal year 2010 and 45% in fiscal year 2011 as compared to the fiscal year 2008 distributions. During the same 2010-2011 budget years, the state projects the General Revenue Fund will fall 18% and 16% respectively. The Governor is recommending cuts to public libraries that far exceed the state's drop in revenue.

Ohio libraries have been slashing their budgets for months to find ways to maintain library services with a 20% reduction in state dollars. Reductions of this magnitude will force libraries to close completely, close branches, or drastically cut hours and services – beginning July 1.

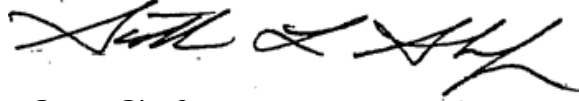
In the last biennium budget, the OLC supported the proposal to fund Ohio's libraries with 2.2% of taxes paid to the state. In the past eight years, these revenues have declined. So far, since January 2009, public libraries have lost 20% of their state revenue. Governor Strickland's proposed 30% reduction in addition to that loss.

The Governor's proposed funding cuts come at a time when Ohio's public libraries are experiencing unprecedented increases in demand for services. In every community throughout the state, Ohioans are turning to their public libraries for free high speed Internet to access information on employment opportunities, children and teens are beginning summer reading programs, and people of all ages are turning to the library for information and education.

During the next nine days, you will have to decide whether or not to accept the Governor's proposal. You will determine if Ohio's public libraries can continue to serve the citizens in your district. You will decide if Ohio's public libraries will continue to be an integral part of their communities or if they become just another casualty in the Ohio's economic recession.

Again, I urge you to reject Governor Strickland's proposal to slash Ohio's public library funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Shafer", written in a cursive style.

Scott Shafer  
President  
Ohio Library Council