

June 23, 2005

The Honorable Bob Taft
Riffe Center for Government and the Arts
77 South High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Governor Taft,

The Ohio Library Council respectfully requests your consideration of a veto Section 3375.40 (I) between lines 34418 and 34419 in Amended Substitute House Bill 66. This section was amended into H.B. 66 by the Ohio House of Representatives, removed by the Ohio Senate, and returned in the Conference Committee to the final version of the bill.

Ohio's public libraries have a long-standing tradition of providing their services to all Ohioans at no charge. By statute, Ohio's libraries "free" public libraries. As you know, it is your grandfather's strong commitment to public libraries that is the basis of our ability to provide our services for free. State Senator Robert Taft introduced the legislation that provided the intangible tax as the source of funding for Ohio's public libraries – to make public library materials available to all Ohio citizens at no charge. This is an important legacy, and set Ohio's libraries on the course to be recognized as the libraries with the highest circulation and best resources in the country.

We would appreciate it if you would consider the following issues;

1. As written in the budget, these fees could be charged on all non-print library resources. This would include books-on-tape, Internet access, reference questions, children's videos, audio-visual materials for the blind and handicapped, as well as DVDs and videotapes.

2. These fees will be subject to sales tax and would require public libraries to obtain vendor licenses.
3. Administering a fee program would be difficult. Imagine asking children to pay a dollar to check out the Lion King or an early-reader book-on-tape.
4. Without an established statewide schedule of fees, patrons would use the collections of those libraries with lower fees, exhausting those collections.
5. Many of our patrons would see these new fees as double taxation.
6. Public libraries are concerned that even though this language is permissive, legislators may feel that they have provided a new revenue stream to libraries that can substitute for state funding.

Eight million Ohioans are patrons of their local public library. We urge you to veto this section of HB 66 and continue your strong support for FREE public libraries.

Sincerely,

Lynda Murray
Director of Government Relations