

**Ohio Library Council  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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ITEM NO.: **5.C**

MEETING DATE: **March 13, 2026**

SUBJECT: **OLC PR Campaign/Polling**

SUBMITTED BY: **Michelle Francis**

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**REPORT FOR DISCUSSION**

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On Feb. 24, 2026, the OLC released results from a statewide poll showing strong bipartisan support for Ohio's public libraries, with voters identifying library services as essential to everyday life.

The January 2026 research, conducted by Public Opinion Strategies on behalf of the Ohio Library Council and the Ohio Township Association, examined voter attitudes toward libraries, townships and local funding. The findings show overwhelming appreciation for library services and broad agreement across party lines that libraries are a worthwhile public investment. Libraries also rank among the most trusted and highly valued public services in Ohio.

The press release, poll memo from Public Opinion Strategies and an executive summary are included below.



**For Immediate Release**

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## **New research shows Ohioans strongly value local library and township services — and support local funding that keeps them strong**

**For millions of Ohioans, the services that shape daily life, emergency response, safe roads, job help, and access to learning — come from local libraries and township government**

**COLUMBUS** — February 24, 2026 – New statewide research shows overwhelming bipartisan support for Ohio’s public libraries and township governments, with voters saying these services are essential to everyday life.

The January 2026 survey of Ohio voters finds that libraries and townships rank among the most trusted and highest-valued public services in the state.

“Ohioans view their libraries and township services as everyday necessities, not optional amenities,” said Neil Newhouse, a nationally respected pollster with Washington-based Public Opinion Strategies who conducted the research. “What the data show is that appreciation for the services comes first. When voters understand how those services are funded locally, support for maintaining that funding follows.”

**Across Ohio, public libraries rely on locally approved property tax levies, which now account for more than half of their overall funding statewide. Townships rely heavily on locally approved property taxes — about two-thirds of their revenue on average to fund essential services.**

While most residents don’t initially understand how townships and libraries are funded, the research finds that once Ohioans learn these services rely primarily on locally approved property taxes, strong majorities support keeping that local funding in place.

### **Ohio’s Public Libraries: Providing Everyday Services Residents Rely On**

Libraries support children and families through early literacy programs, tutoring, and after-school spaces. They strengthen the workforce by helping residents search for jobs, build skills, and access career training. They bridge the digital divide with free Wi-Fi, computers, and technology assistance. And they deliver everyday services such as printing, notary work, and access to government resources. According to the research (executive summary attached):

- **90% of Ohioans say public libraries are important to their local community, and rank among the highest rated local services**
- **69% recall a specific time their library helped them personally**
- **87% say they get their money's worth from library services for the taxes they pay**
- **71% believe libraries provide many of the most basic services people rely on every day**
- **Nearly half of Ohio voters say they or a family member used a library service in the past month, and nearly two-thirds have done so within the past few months**

"Ohioans don't just appreciate their libraries, they rely on them on a daily basis," said Michelle Francis, Executive Director of the Ohio Library Council. "They are locally supported, widely used, and deeply embedded in their communities. This research shows that people see real, personal value in the services libraries provide. They understand that library funding isn't abstract."

*As one Ohioan said: "Local libraries give my kids a safe place to study, borrow books, and access Wi-Fi after school... I rely on the library as a neighborhood hub, with free Wi-Fi for job hunts and room for study groups."*

*Another added: "They helped me write a resume, print it, and find jobs to send it to. They provide job counseling, job postings, and ways to acquire materials."*

Among the most trusted and widely used public institutions in the state, Ohio's **251 public library systems** are free, welcoming hubs that support daily life at every stage. With some of the highest library usage rates in the nation, Ohio libraries log more than **48 million visits each year**, and **7.4 million Ohioans hold library cards**, underscoring their central role in communities across the state.

Independent economic analysis shows that every **\$1 invested** in Ohio's libraries returns more than **\$4 in value, generating over \$3 billion in statewide economic impact**.

### **Ohio's Townships: Frontline Services That Keep Communities Safe**

The statewide survey also confirms the central role townships play in daily life for roughly four million Ohio residents — more than one-third of the state's population.

Across Ohio's 1,308 townships, these governments deliver the core public safety and infrastructure services that keep communities functioning. Townships provide the services residents rely on most — from fire, EMS, and police protection, to maintaining more than 41,000 miles of local roads, more than the Ohio Department of Transportation. They also provide parks, zoning, and senior services that help keep communities safe, stable, and livable.

Altogether, communities supported by township services account for more than **\$413 billion in economic activity and 1.8 million jobs across Ohio**.

The research shows that not only do residents rely on township services, but also report strong satisfaction with both the services themselves and the communities they support, and township residents overwhelmingly believe decisions about how those services are funded should remain in local hands.

- **64%** say townships provide many of the most basic services people rely on
- **79%** of township residents support keeping funding authority local
- **76%** say they are satisfied with their community as a place to live — the highest satisfaction level among residents in townships, cities, villages, and other local governments statewide
- **85%** are satisfied with fire and ambulance services, and **74%** are satisfied with parks and recreation

Residents consistently describe township government in practical, everyday terms. One respondent noted, *“If something happens, township services are who show up — fire, EMS, road crews. That’s what people depend on.”* Another emphasized local accountability: *“Townships handle the everyday things communities need, and because they’re local, they understand what residents actually want.”*

**“Township governments exist to provide the services residents count on most,” said Heidi M. Fought, Executive Director of the Ohio Township Association. “Local funding allows communities to decide what works best for them.”**

In the end, the research points to a simple conclusion: Ohioans value the services their libraries and townships provide every day, and they want decisions about those services to stay close to home. From safe roads and emergency response to learning, job access, and community connection, these local services are central to daily life across the state. Protecting them means ensuring communities have the local tools, funding, and flexibility needed to keep them strong, responsive, and accessible to the residents who depend on them.

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# Ohio's Public Libraries: Essential Services Ohioans Rely On



**Ohio's public libraries are vital to local communities, delivering literacy, workforce support, and connectivity to millions of Ohioans through services residents depend on year-round.**

Across the state, people turn to their libraries for help, opportunity, and connection — to learn, work, apply, search, and get help for the needs and problems they face.

Among the most trusted and heavily used public institutions in the state, Ohio's libraries are free, welcoming hubs that support people at every stage of life. With the **second-highest visits per capita in the nation**, they serve millions each year while doing more with less (the fourth lowest in terms of expenditure per library transaction).

A library isn't a luxury — it's an everyday problem solver, a place people turn when they need help, answers, opportunity, or a way forward. Ohio libraries fulfill this role by delivering a broad range of important services:

## **Supporting Children, Students, and Families**

Libraries support learning at every stage—offering early literacy, homework help, tutoring and after-school programming. They provide spaces where kids and teens can learn, grow, and stay engaged year-round.

## **Strengthening Ohio's Workforce and Local Economies**

Libraries are a front door to opportunity, helping residents search and apply for jobs, build résumés, and access career resources. They support job seekers, entrepreneurs, and small businesses with training, technology, meeting space, online courses, and one-on-one assistance that fuels employment and local economic growth.

## **Bridge the Digital Divide and Access to Information**

Libraries provide free access to books, e-books, research tools, learning materials, and media—along with essential technology like Wi-Fi, computers, printers, scanners, and hands-on tech support—so every Ohioan can participate fully in modern life.

## **Deliver Everyday Services People Rely On**

Libraries offer practical services residents depend on, including printing, faxing, notary services, passport processing, and access to critical digital and government resources.

## **Serve as Trusted Community Anchors**

Libraries are welcoming, neutral gathering places—open to everyone—where programs and partnerships are shaped locally to meet the specific needs of each neighborhood.

### **Libraries are among the most heavily used institutions in Ohio**

48.1 million library visits each year

7.4 million Ohioans hold library cards

251 public library systems

153.7 million items borrowed or downloaded annually

23.4 million Wi-Fi sessions

and 6.3 million computer uses per year.

## Public support for libraries is broad, deep, bipartisan and measurable

According to research conducted in January 2026:

- **90% of Ohioans** say public libraries are important to their local community.
- **More than two-thirds (69%)** can recall a specific time their library helped them personally.
- **An overwhelming 87%** say they get their money's worth from library services for the taxes they pay.
- **64%** of Ohio voters say they or a family member used a library service within the past few months.
- **71%** believe libraries provide many of the most basic services people rely on in their daily lives
- Nearly nine-out-of-ten Ohio voters (**87%**) believe they get their money's worth in services from their local libraries for the taxes they pay, including 83% of Republicans, 85% of Independents and 93% of Democrats.
- Residents consistently ranked libraries among the highest-rated local public services.

## Local Property Taxes Fund Libraries – and Losing Them has Real Consequences

**Across Ohio, public libraries rely on locally approved property tax levies, which now account for more than half of their overall funding statewide.** A proposed constitutional amendment is being circulated that would eliminate property taxes statewide, beginning as early as 2027. No replacement funding source has been identified. As such, **eliminating that funding source would have severe consequences:**

- **Essential services would face immediate reductions**, including canceled programs, reduced hours, and potential library branch closures.
- **Local control would be lost.** Abolishing property taxes takes power away from the voters stripping communities of their decision-making ability to shape library funding based on local needs and values.
- **Community partnerships would weaken.** Libraries stretch limited dollars by working closely with schools, workforce agencies, food banks, arts organizations, and social services. Funding cuts unravel those networks and reduce their reach.

## PROTECT WHAT COMMUNITIES DEPEND ON. Ohio's Libraries: Trusted. Local. Essential.

**Libraries deliver exceptional value for taxpayers.** Independent analysis shows that every \$1 invested in Ohio's public libraries returns more than \$4 in value to Ohioans — and more than \$3 billion in direct economic impact statewide.

**They are locally supported, widely used, and deeply trusted. Protecting them means protecting the local services residents rely on.**

**TO: INTERESTED PARTIES**

**FROM: NEIL NEWHOUSE, FOUNDER – PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES**

**RE: RECENT OHIO STATEWIDE POLLING RESULTS**

**DATE: FEBRUARY 19, 2026**

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### **METHODOLOGY**

*Public Opinion Strategies recently conducted an Ohio statewide poll of registered voters on behalf of the Ohio Library Council and the Ohio Township Association. The poll consisted of interviews with 800 registered voters in addition to an oversample to reach a total of 496 township residents. The margin of error on the 800 sample of voters is  $\pm 3.95\%$ , and for the township sample is  $\pm 5.02\%$ .*

### **KEY TAKEAWAY**

Ohioans view their libraries and township services as everyday necessities, not optional amenities, and they value the services that each provide every day.

### **KEY FINDINGS: OHIO LIBRARIES**

- 1.** Ohio voters rate their level of satisfaction with their “local public libraries” among the highest of eight different services that voters receive in their communities (86% “satisfied” 51% “very satisfied”).
- 2.** Fully 90% of voters believe that public libraries “are important to the community,” with many citing libraries are free, equitable hubs for learning, internet/technology access, safe “third spaces” to keep kids engaged after school and in the summer, and offer programs to serve seniors, kids and low-income residents.
- 3.** But, Ohio voters don’t just give public libraries “lip-service,” they utilize library services – 44% of those interviewed say that they or a family member have utilized a public library service in the past month, and 64% have within the “past few months.” Further, fully 69% of Ohio voters say they “remember a time when your local public library helped them.” These figures clearly cut across partisan lines (63% among Republicans, 68% among Independents and 77% among Democrats).
- 4.** Nearly nine-out-of-ten Ohio voters (87%) believe they get their money’s worth in services from their local libraries for the taxes they pay, including 83% of Republicans, 85% of Independents and 93% of Democrats.
- 5.** When asked about the role that Ohio’s public libraries play in voters’ lives, fully 71% believe that “Ohio’s public Libraries provide many of the basic services people rely on today.”
- 6.** It’s probably not a stretch to say that Ohioans are in love with their local libraries, as they provide services that residents need and depend on.

**(continued)**

## KEY FINDINGS: OHIO TOWNSHIPS

1. While Ohioans may understand their local governance, they have no idea how townships are funded, with fewer than 50%, including those living in townships, knowing their local government is primarily funded through property taxes.
2. Nearly 80% of township residents believe that local voters should be responsible for deciding how to allocate township services. This sentiment cuts across party lines, with 80% of Republicans, 72% of Independents and 79% of Democrats agreeing.
3. When asked about the importance of a number of services they receive, township voters put fire/ambulance, roads/bridges and police protection at the top of the list. And, by a 48-point margin, township voters say they are satisfied with the quality and value of services provided by their local government for the taxes they pay.
4. Similar to the findings about public libraries, 64% of township residents believe that “Ohio’s townships provide many of the basic services people rely on today.”
5. Fully 76% of township voters say they are satisfied with their community as a place to live — the highest satisfaction level among residents in townships, cities, villages, and other local governments statewide.