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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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