



17 March 2009

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Via U.S. Mail and Fax: (717) 772-8284

Dear Governor Rendell,

As the CEO of the Special Libraries Association (SLA), an international library and information organization with more than 11,000 members worldwide, I am writing to express SLA's strong concern over the proposed 50% budget cut for the State Library of Pennsylvania.

The current recession is affecting everyone, and there is no doubt tough decisions must be made. But these decisions must also be made prudently, with an eye on the future. SLA opposes the downsizing or diminution of library services at the State Library of Pennsylvania until a detailed plan is produced and vetted by qualified information and policy experts who understand the critical nature of maintaining valuable services and access to information for current and future users—government, business, researchers, and individuals.

Has such a plan been created? If so, has this plan been made available for review and comment by experts and those affected? What systems have been developed to receive comments and identify alternative solutions, unanticipated outcomes, or recommendations to maximize the success of the library while at the same time reducing expenses?

The State Library has holdings in almost every area of human concern and houses collections and indexes that cannot be found in other locations. Most notable are its genealogy and local history collections and the law collection—a collection that is unique in its current and historical Pennsylvania law materials, including Pennsylvania appellate court records and briefs, legal treatises and periodicals, and Pennsylvania county court reports, which are critical to researchers. The State Library also houses a collection of historic and current newspapers that comprises more than 100,000 microfilm reels and over 3,000-plus bound volumes going back more than 100 years.

An extreme budget cut like this is short-sighted and will give way to increased costs for tax-payers that are not apparent right now. We are concerned that the specialized and unique collections

developed over the library's rich history may be inaccessible or fall into disrepair, requiring much greater financial expense in the future than was saved in the near term.

The citizenry of Pennsylvania and beyond rely on the services and collections of this library to effectively conduct their work. From what little SLA has seen, it seems that core services will be heavily affected. What plans and procedures have been made to provide or redirect users to the appropriate resources?

Understandably, these difficult economic times require hard decisions and budget cuts, but it is imperative to fully understand the impact of these cuts beyond the immediate goal of saving money. It is critical in this current economic crisis that an information management strategy be developed. Most importantly, it must involve information professionals, who understand how information should be selected organized, analyzed, and disseminated. Only these information professionals will fully understand what must, can, and should be prioritized as you consider any budget cuts.

I ask that you and your leadership team provide a detailed plan of how the State Library will function after such an extreme budget cut. A more fully funded library budget will serve the interests of government, business, and private citizens and will save more money in the long run.

Respectfully,

Janice R. Lachance
Chief Executive Officer
Special Libraries Association
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