



# NORTH COUNTRY LIBRARY SYSTEM

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## **New York State Support for Libraries 2011-2012** **Legislative Summary and Next Steps – Steve Bolton, April 20, 2011**

The State budget that was passed earlier this month continued the decline of support for libraries, but had a couple of bright spots.

The Governor had proposed a 10%, or \$8.4 million, cut for libraries.

- The Senate attempted to restore \$4.2 million of this cut.
- The Assembly proposed the full 10% reduction, with no restoration.
- They agreed to a \$3 million restoration, so the cut is 6.45%. \$84.4 to \$79 million.

The \$79 million plunges libraries below the dollar amount received in 1994/95, when State aid for libraries was \$81.5 million. Inflation since 1994 has reduced our purchasing power by 50.8%. A point to remember is that State Aid helps libraries of all types: public, school, college, hospital, historical societies and more.

On the plus side, part of the \$79 million funding, labeled “Supplementary Aid”, \$4 million, had never been made a permanent part of the formula aid. It was voted back into existence each budget year, so we all held our collective breath waiting to see if this segment of aid would be eliminated entirely. The Legislature made “Supplementary Aid” (I hope this gets a new name now!) permanent after the budget vote.

In addition, the Legislature accepted the Education Commissioner’s ability to grant waivers from the local maintenance of effort requirements that are in Education Law 272. This states that funding for a public library system will be cut by 25% if the local funding for the member libraries has declined by 5% over the previous two years. The law remains intact, but now the Commissioner has some leeway in enforcement of the law.

### **What’s Next?**

Last year the library community submitted suggestions for no-cost legislation that would none-the-less help libraries. The legislation passed the Senate but was held in the Assembly.

- Contact your Assembly representative and Senator. They need to hear about how State Aid (Library Systems) makes your library more efficient and how shared, cooperative services, benefit your patrons and save you money. (Contact info attached)
- Contact your Assembly representative and Senator. We need the match amount changed from 50% to 25% for the Construction Grant. The amount of money remains the same, so this change has no fiscal impact on the State budget. Last year \$124,000 of the \$408,500 available to NCLS member libraries was returned to Albany because libraries cannot meet the 50% match. (Legislative priorities, attached)
- Do not hesitate to contact me with questions. I will be happy to attend your Board meeting to discuss these topics and NCLS services. (I really do enjoy attending library Board meetings – why does everyone laugh when I say that? ☺)