



December, 2007

Dear Colleague,

As you know the VLA has been vigorously pursuing state financial support for public libraries, and we are writing to ask that your library consider making a contribution to help us in this effort.

We seek an appropriation of \$1.6 million from the State of Vermont. This investment will support all libraries that meet minimum standards in an amount equal to 10% of a library's operating income with a \$1,500 minimum award. This support will allow Vermont's diverse network of libraries to meet strong community demand for their services: to purchase books and media for circulation, to be open to the public on a regular basis, and to keep pace with changes in technology.

#### **Why \$1.6 million?**

According to a recent report from COSLA (Chief Officers of State Library Agencies), state governments in the U.S. provide 10% of public library operating income. To achieve the 10% level in Vermont, the VLA seeks an appropriation of \$1.6 million.

#### **What is the proposed formula to distribute state aid?**

To achieve a formula specific to the needs of our rural state and diverse libraries, the VLA proposes a formula that has proven successful in the distribution of grants from the Vermont Public Library Foundation, funded through the Freeman Foundation. Based on a percentage of each library's operating budget "the Freeman formula" ensured that libraries with small incomes received a modest grant (with a minimum base grant of \$1,500) and larger libraries, serving more Vermonters, received proportionally larger amounts in support of their more comprehensive services.

#### **How will Vermont's libraries make use of state funding?**

Each Vermont library is uniquely responsive to the community it serves, and each library has needs which may be likewise unique. We list only some of many examples of how Vermont's public libraries would be able to use State funds to enhance the services they provide to Vermonters.

- Restore or expand existing hours.
- Bring library services to senior centers, home daycare centers, community lunches, and adults and children who cannot easily come to the library.
- Replace computer hardware and software.
- Hire a children's librarian.
- Add basic facilities such as telephones and restrooms.
- Purchase new materials for lending to patrons.
- Obtain new patron services such as audio book downloads.
- Retain high-quality staff.
- Make needed repairs to physical plant.

Over...

### **Why we need your help.**

Last year the VLA was able to hire John Shullenberger, an attorney and lobbyist, to lead our campaign at the statehouse. The cost was \$15,000 plus we spent about \$2,000 on promotion and marketing. We were able to spend these funds because of an accumulated surplus from prior years from VLA conference revenues.

For the upcoming legislative session our budget is \$16,000 to hire John and for promotional expenses. VLA can contribute \$3,500 so we need to raise \$12,500 and we hope your library can support the effort with a donation to VLA in the range of \$75-\$750 based on the size of your library.

It is difficult to predict whether we will be successful in our efforts this year, but we are clear that we will *not* be successful unless we have an ongoing presence at the statehouse through a lobbyist.

### **Can my library contribute to a lobbying effort?**

Although none of us is a lawyer, we believe that every library in Vermont can contribute to this effort. If you are a municipal library, you may need to consult with your town manager or elected leadership, and the contribution may need to come from a Friends group or even from contributions from the board.

If your library or Friends group is a tax exempt 501(c)(3) corporation you can contribute to a lobbying effort if it is not a "substantial part" of your organization's activities. The IRS guidelines describe "substantial" as:

- 20% of the first \$500,000 of its exempt purpose expenditures;
- 15% of the next \$500,000, and so on, up to one million dollars a year.

For example, if your library's budget is \$100,000, you can contribute up to \$20,000 to lobbying activities without jeopardizing your tax exempt status.

### **Conclusion**

State aid will add critical new revenue to support public libraries. We hope you can contribute to the effort and we ask that you make a contribution by the end of the year. Feel free to contact any of us if you have a question, and we would also meet with your board if you would like.

Thank you and feel free to contact any of us if you have questions.

#### VLA Government Relations Committee:

Paula Baker, Rutland Free Library, 773-1860

Susan D'Amico, Roxbury Free Library, 485-6860

Hilari Farrington, Kellogg-Hubbard Library, 223-3338

Martin Hahn, Kellogg-Hubbard Library, 223-3338

Lisa von Kann, St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, 748-8291

Marty Reid, Burnham Memorial Library, 879-7576

Deb Spackman, Norman Williams Public Library, 457-2295

**P.S.** The VLA Intellectual Freedom Committee is continuing to work on a bill regarding library confidentiality in Vermont, and will be sending you more details about that soon. Our lobbying work will include this critical legislative effort.

Yes, I want to support state aid for public libraries in Vermont!

**Amount:**

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$750           | Library: _____           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500           | Your Name _____          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250           | Address: _____           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$150           | City: _____ State: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75            | Zip: _____ Phone: _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: \$ _____ | E-mail: _____            |

Please make your check payable to "VLA" and send to VLA Treasurer:

Donna Edwards  
Samuel Read Hall Library  
Lyndon State College