

Library Update

A few blog posts ago, I made a plea to save Ohio libraries because the governor was proposing a budget plan that included a major cut in library funding. The vote went through the state legislature, and the budget was re-worked in such a way that the libraries received less than half of the budget cut that was originally proposed, so YAY! Our voices were heard! In this economic crisis, it is understandable that funding is going to be cut on certain community resources, so let's hope that our libraries can figure out a way to continue their many services without changing too much in light of these cuts. I received an email back from one of the congressmen, so I thought I'd share it below. Not that the letter was written personally for me, but it's nice to have my efforts acknowledged. Hopefully my friends who work for the state can keep their jobs in light of the budget re-working!

Dear Ms.

Thank you for contacting me with your concerns over Governor Strickland's proposal to reduce the general revenue transfers to the Public Library fund by \$227 million over the next two years. A vital aspect of democracy is that all citizens are able to express their views, and I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with me. Although I was not able to respond to you prior to the budget vote, please know that your correspondence as well as messages from across our region and the state had a major influence on my work on this bill and, ultimately, how I voted.

Due to the economic situation that the State of Ohio is encountering, all agencies and departments have been forced to absorb cuts in state funding. Fortunately, during the conference committee, an agreement was reached to reduce the Governor's proposed cut to library funds so that libraries statewide will experience only an \$84 million cut over the next two years. While I realize that this is still a considerable reduction, it is substantially lower than the \$227 million originally proposed by Governor Strickland.

Again, thank you again for contacting me with your concerns on the budget. If I may ever be of assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to write or call.

Sincerely,



Steve Buehrer

State Senator

1st Senate District

A Stricken State

I took the tv away from the kids today (not that they watch it that much anyway) so I can watch the events in Illinois unfold as their governor Rod Blagojevich is arrested on corruption charges. No surprise there, just an interesting story being followed by a former resident of that state. In fact, we left Illinois for good in 2003 just months after Blago assumed office, which was mostly a coincidence, but I would say that his being elected to the governor's office did add to the feeling we had that the state was falling apart. It was that obvious from the beginning that Blago was no good. Over the years, I've been following news stories in Illinois by reading dailyherald.com, an online version of a suburban newspaper. Every time there was anything in the paper related to Blago, there was no shortage of comments from readers about the purported corruption of the governor. In October of this year, the governor's approval rating was a measly 4%. And today, the you-know-what has hit the fan. The governor of Illinois is in prison – the second gov in a row from that

state to serve time, as a matter of fact. As we speak, err, as you read this, former Illinois Governor George Ryan is probably watching the Blagojevich coverage from the federal prison he currently calls home. I'm just curious if it makes anyone nervous that our new President-elect is from a state that can't seem to keep its leaders out of the slammer. Hopefully, Barack Obama can set a new standard for politicians from Illinois – that would be refreshing.

But in the meantime, watching Blago's saga unfold is compelling – the reporters on CNN are saying that the breadth of the corruption is unimaginable. They're saying Blago engaged in a 'crime spree' while in office and the details are troubling – including allegations of \$8 million in funding being pulled from a children's hospital because its CEO did not contribute \$50,000 to Blago's campaign. And I'm not writing this to pick on Blago or make any sort of political statement – it's not that I'm the type of person who smiles at the misfortune of others either, but hey, he did this to himself. I just feel badly for the residents of Illinois who trusted this man to be their leader and their representative, and now they're forced to watch with the rest of the world while he is exposed for what he truly is, giving their state a horrible reputation in the process. The main victims in this situation are the Blagojevich family, and it's sad that Rod's two young children will probably have to grow up now without a father in their lives. And unfortunately, Blagojevich is just the latest in a long line of corrupt officials from the Land of Lincoln. Since the early 1970's, 3 former Illinois governors have served time in prison, not including Blagojevich who is a current governor. Here's to hoping the politicians of Illinois can get their act together amidst their growing tradition of disreputableness.