



The Voice of the Library Community

New York Library Association

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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

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SIENA POLL CONFIRMS LIBRARY USAGE SOARING; CRITICAL EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE FOR WOMEN, COMMUNITIES OF COLOR, LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS; MAJORITY OF NEW YORKERS DEMAND INCREASED LIBRARY FUNDING

ALBANY, NY – A Siena College Research Institute poll conducted the week of January 11th found that local public library usage is up 10% statewide over the last three years, with usage by young women and communities of color up nearly 15%, and up nearly 20% among those households making less than \$50,000 annually. This surge in usage, along with the findings detailed below, confirm that traditionally underrepresented communities are increasingly reliant on the resources provided by their local public library, and library funding must be viewed as an equality issue.

The Siena poll findings include:

- Library usage is up 10% statewide, 15% among women respondents aged 18-34, nearly 15% among African-American respondents, 15% among Latino respondents, and among all income demographics, with usage up 20% for those households making less than \$50,000 annually;
- **A clear majority of respondents want increased library funding, with nearly 45% advocating for library aid to increase in proportion with overall education funding, and 30% saying library aid should be fully funded under the law;**
- For nearly 33% of African-American and Latino respondents, and 25% of households making less than \$50,000 annually, the public library is their **primary source of internet access**;
- Of the respondents who have used their local public library for job seeking or career building programs in the last six months, 53% were African-American, and 40% were households making less than \$50,000 annually;
- **94% of respondents said public libraries are “very” or “somewhat” important to our state’s educational infrastructure, while more than 80% of women, African-Americans, Latinos, and households making less than \$50,000 say public libraries are “very important” to our educational system.**

Library funding is nearly 20% less than what is mandated in state Education Law, and is currently at 1997 levels. In last year’s Executive Budget, library aid was cut by 4.7%, while proposed education aid was increased 3.8%. Total education spending in last year’s enacted budget increased 5.7%, but library aid increased only 1.2%.

Senator Hugh T. Farley (R, C, I-Schenectady): “Throughout my career I have fought tirelessly for library funding because educational resources, including internet access, should be available to anyone with a desire to learn. Children, seniors and young families in my district increasingly rely on the educational opportunities provided by these cherished public institutions. It’s time we fund libraries in a manner consistent with their record-high usage.”

Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr. (I, D, WF-Sag Harbor): “Given the tremendous increase in usage, it is not surprising that a majority of New Yorkers think we should increase library funding, with many demanding we should fully fund our libraries. I successfully fought for increased library funding last year, and I call on my colleagues in the legislature to recognize library funding is about equal access to information, and providing everyone in the community with a place to go and learn regardless of age or income.”

Assemblyman Marcos Crespo (D – Bronx): “For many of my constituents, there is no question that library funding is an equality issue. The local public library is often their only source of internet access, and where they go to work on a resume or apply for jobs online. I’ve heard from countless constituents - young students, parents and seniors - about the invaluable resource the local library branch serves for their educational and economic development opportunities.”

NYLA Executive Director Jeremy Johannesen: “In the upcoming budget negotiations, the New York Library Association calls on Governor Cuomo, and our supporters in the State Senate and the Assembly to recognize that local public libraries are at the core of our state’s educational infrastructure, and must be fairly and equitably funded. Libraries are chartered by the same Board of Regents that oversees schools, colleges, BOCES and other educational institutions, and library aid is administered through the NYS Department of Education. The fact-based analysis of this data leads to only one conclusion: annual library funding should increase in proportion to increases in overall education funding.”

About NYLA:

The New York Library Association (NYLA) educates and advocates on behalf of New York’s library community. NYLA is the oldest state library association in the country and represents school, college, special and public libraries, library staff, trustees, and students from around the state.

NYLA is the only statewide organization dedicated to advocating on behalf of all libraries and library staff in Albany and serves as the spokesperson on library matters to the media and public policymakers.

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