



## **Report of the NCLA Public Policy/Governmental Relations Committee January 16, 2004**

The NCLA Public Policy/Governmental Relations Committee recommends the following:

- that NCLA Executive Board appropriate a committee budget of \$15,000; and
- that the board authorize the president to enter NCLA into an agreement with the North Carolina Public Library Directors Association (NCPLDA) to hire Capital Strategies for legislative advocacy during the North Carolina General Assembly's 2004 session.

The goal will be to obtain \$2 million in additional funding for NC LIVE so that NC LIVE can maintain existing resources as vendor contracts come up for renewal.

The committee also recommends:

- that the name of the committee be changed to the Public Policy Committee.

Background. During the budget crisis of 2001-2002, NCPLDA sought NCLA's assistance in forestalling an expected eight percent cut to the state's Aid to Public Libraries Fund for the 2002-2003 fiscal year. The two organizations hired Raleigh public relations and lobbying firm Capital Strategies to guide the effort, and to guard against cuts to NC LIVE. The effort succeeded; while the Aid to Public Libraries fund sustained the cut, legislators restored the eight percent in one-time (non-recurring) funding.

With more budget cuts expected in 2003-2004, NCLA and NCPLDA again worked with Capital Strategies during the 2003 legislative session not only to protect NC LIVE and Aid to Public Libraries, but also to restore as recurring funding the eight percent technically cut the previous year. This effort also succeeded.

While the legislative advocacy was underway, an NCLA Advocacy Task Force worked on ways to increase NCLA's power in this arena. Three results of this work have been realized: the election by NCLA of a tax status that allows us to spend up to 20 percent of our total annual outlay on lobbying; the continuation of momentum generated by the initial legislative victories; and the restructuring of the Governmental Relations Committee as a library administrator-level body

with members representing communities of interest similar to NC LIVE. An additional goal stated by the task force has been to put NCLA on the forefront of advocacy that benefits all types of libraries.

The 2004 Session. Over the past year, the NC LIVE leadership has concluded that additional funding will be necessary to maintain existing resources when new contracts are negotiated with vendors over the next two years. The leadership has determined that, in the short term, the avenue through which additional funding can be obtained most effectively is the State Library's revenue stream, as the public library community can approach the legislature directly.

In December, NCPLDA placed the pursuit of additional funding for NC LIVE at the top of its legislative agenda and agreed to share with NCLA the cost of again hiring professional lobbyists. Capital Strategies returned a quote of \$25,000 plus limited out of pocket expenses; the NCPLDA accepted this proposal contingent on NCLA's partnership.

Therefore, the Public Policy Committee requests a budget of \$15,000 as follows:

- \$12,500 for the Capital Strategies agreement
- \$2,500 for expenses associated with this agreement, and any NCLA participation in ALA Legislative Day in Washington this spring.

A successful legislative advocacy effort focused on NC LIVE will have evident benefits for the library community and for NCLA:

- Libraries and library users will retain access to all that NC LIVE currently offers;
- NCLA's advocacy activity will benefit all types of libraries, and therefore, all the state's library patrons;
- Momentum for the concept of NCLA as a powerful advocate for libraries will continue and increase; and
- The organization will have a major selling point for recruiting and retaining members

Respectfully Submitted,

Ross A. Holt  
NCLA Public Policy/Government Relations Committee Chair