

Report of the NCLA Public Policy Committee

April 15, 2005

The 2005 NCLA/NCPLDA lobbying effort has already achieved some initial success with the presence in the joint House and Senate Joint Appropriations Committee on General Government's budget recommendation of \$750,000 additional funding for Aid to Public Libraries (state aid) in each of the two years of the biennium, for a total of \$1.5 million. Additional NC LIVE funding of \$1 million also is alive in the university system's budget.

NCLA/NCPLDA legislative goals for this session of the General Assembly originally called for \$4.7 million in additional funding for state aid; and support of requests for \$1 million in additional NC LIVE funding in the university system's budget and possibly a like amount in the community college system's budget.

The lead Capstrat lobbyist for NCLA/NCPLDA is Leslie Bevacqua Coman. Coman is new to Capstrat, but was ranked sixth in the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research's 2004 listing of the 50 most effective lobbyists, making her the highest-ranked female lobbyist in the history of the rankings. Capstrat's Ken Eudy also is registered as our lobbyist.

State Aid. On advice of the lobbyists, the state aid request was split, with half requested in each year of the biennium. The joint committee whittled the amount significantly to the \$750,000 figure, but it is still the single largest increase in the Department of Cultural Resources budget. The subcommittees on general government in each chamber now will begin work to make final budget recommendations.

The current Capstrat recommendations for grassroots activity are to thank members of the the Joint Appropriations Committee on General Government for their support of the additional funding; and to contact Senate and House Appropriations co-chairs and encourage them to include the additional State Aid funding in their final budgets.

State aid is a fund that provides operating support to public libraries in the form of block grants and grants based on local per capita income to ensure a basic level of library service in all 100 counties. State aid comprises a small portion of the annual budget in large urban library systems; some 15 percent in county systems like Randolph and Rowan; and close to half in regional systems that serve a total of 49 counties. Details at <http://statelibrary.dcr.state.nc.us/ld/staid/allocat.htm>.

NC LIVE. The University of North Carolina system's budget includes a request for \$1 million in additional funding for NC LIVE; Coman is in contact with the UNC system lobbyist and will have a status report soon. The status of NC LIVE funding in the community college system budget remains unclear, but a request for additional funding does not appear to be present.

Other legislation. The General Assembly is considering two other library-related pieces of legislation. Senate Bill 971 is the special library license plate bill; Coman reports that this type of legislation usually is not considered till late in the session. Senate Bill 708 and House Bill 972 seek to provide a mechanism that will allow a county or counties to avoid the maintenance of effort requirement tied to receipt of state aid; the bills have been referred to committees, with our lobbyists and public library directors encouraging House and Senate leaders to take no action.

North Carolina Library Legislative Day. A Library Legislative Day event organized by NCPLDA will take place on Wednesday, April 20. Talking points include support for both the state aid and NC LIVE funding increases.

ALA Legislative Day. Library Development Section Chief Jeanne Crisp will represent the State Library of North Carolina at ALA Legislative Day in Washington, D.C.

NCLA/NCPLDA Advocacy Facts. Without regard to funding in the works this year, lobbying by NCLA/NCPLDA has generated \$5.1 million in funding affecting North Carolina's libraries over the past three years, a return of \$92 in library funding for every \$1 spent on lobbying by NCLA and NCPLDA combined. The return NCLA's share only is \$184 in library funding for every \$1 spent on lobbying.

The lobbying success includes \$1.25 million in additional NC LIVE funding -- a 60 percent increase in the amount the Resource Advisory Committee will have available as it renegotiates all NC LIVE subscriptions and seeks new ones for 2006.