

## Libraries and the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature



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Public Education

**Texline 306, June 2, 2015**

**Texas Library Association    [www.txla.org/advocate](http://www.txla.org/advocate)**

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Libraries have cause to celebrate! The Legislature approved additional funding for State Library programs, including Shared Digital Content, e-archives, staff salary (at the Texas State Library and Archives Commission), and other items. At the time of printing, the Governor must still sign the Appropriations bill, but we anticipate no changes to library funding.

### **Brief overview of some State Library Funding Requests**

- Base budget (i.e., money for current program and services) – Fully Funded
- Request for Shared Digital Content (i.e., additional funds for TexShare/TexQuest) - \$6 million (of \$6.9 m requested)
- Request for new funds for e-archives program – \$707k funded (out of \$900K requested)
- Request for library workforce training support (\$550K) – not funded
- Request for agency salary increases - \$400k funded (of \$900K requested)
- Request for records management FTEs – not funded
- Request for state-required accounting system - funded

We are very pleased that so many requests for additional funding were approved. This additional state funding will position the State Library and libraries throughout Texas to deepen their support of the educational and economic needs of the people of our state.

***We thank all of the library supporters of Texas who spoke up for libraries. This victory is yours!***

### **The Session in Broad Strokes**

The 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature was marked by several features: 1) new leadership in key positions, including Governor Greg Abbott, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, and House Appropriations Chairman John Otto (although an experienced House member) and Senate Finance Committee Chairwoman Jane Nelson (also a very experienced member of the Texas Legislature); 2) an overwhelming (and, for all practical purposes, super majority) of Republicans in both the House and Senate, with a strong conservative Tea Party coalition; 3) unprecedented state tax revenue (projected at about \$113 at the start of the session); and 4) broad promises for tax relief.

Early in the session, state leaders identified border security, transportation, higher education, pre-K education, tax relief, school vouchers, and ethics reform as policy priorities. While final legislative action

did include funding increases for border security, transportation, higher education, and pre-K education, lawmakers failed to pass legislation on ethics reforms. Similarly, proposals on school vouchers and immigration reform did not progress.

## **Budget**

The 2016-2017 Texas Budget spends \$209.4 billion, which includes all types of funds (state, federal, and other sources). General Revenue (that's state money for the most part) makes up about \$106.6 billion of that total and is the pool of funding on which state lawmakers focus (since it is primarily in their control).

### *Key Budget Areas*

Public Education: \$41.2 billion (an increase of \$1.5 billion in General Revenue from last biennium). Note: The State is still the middle of a legal dispute with a coalition of school districts over state funding.

Higher Education: \$19.9 billion (an increase of 7.5%, mostly assigned through higher enrollment and a higher per student allocation). Note: State budget writers ultimately settled on \$40 million for the Governor's University Research Fund Initiative to attract top researchers to public universities.

### *Tax Cuts*

While many iterations of tax relief were proposed throughout the session, the Legislature settled on a \$3.8 billion plan that includes a 25% across-the-board cut in the franchise tax rate (for businesses) and a \$10,000 increase in the homestead exemption that will save the average home owner about \$125 annually. Note: The change in the homestead exemption must still be approved by voters in a Constitutional ballot in November.

Governor Abbott announced that he does not expect to call back legislators for a special session. The 85<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature convenes on January 10, 2017. For now, happy Sine Die to all!

## **Key Library-Related Legislation**

**HB 1475** (Author: Aycock | et al.): Relating to telecommunications service discounts for educational institutions, libraries, hospitals, and telemedicine centers. *This bill died in committee.*

**HB 100** (Author: Zerwas | et al.): – Tuition Revenue Bonds for Institutions of Higher Education. Passed and sent to the Governor for signing.

In other news, few legislative measures monitored by the library community survived the session.

- **HB 1799** (Author: Thompson, Senfronia): Relating to the adoption of the Uniform Electronic Legal Material Act. *This bill died in committee.*
- **SB 1188** (Author: Seliger): Relating to a study on the feasibility of requiring certain researchers to make research papers available to the public. *This bill did not make it to the full House for final approval by the Legislature.*

- **SB 1668** (Author: Zaffirini): Relating to an online searchable central grant database. *This bill died in committee.*
- **SB 20 /HB 3241** (Author: Nelson | et al.): Relating to state agency contracting; authorizing fees; creating an offense. *Passed.*
- **SB 1609** (Author: Huffines): Relating to a study on relocating the Legislative Reference Library. *This bill died in committee.*
- **HB 3127** (Author: King, Ken): Relating to the authority of certain telecommunications providers to commit to making infrastructure and improvements in exchange for support from the universal service fund. *This bill died in committee.*
- **HB 2796** (Author: King, Ken): Relating to the authority of certain telecommunications providers to commit to making infrastructure and network improvements. *This bill died in committee.*
- **HB 3492** (Author: Muñoz, Jr.): Relating to a permanent endowment to support the construction, acquisition, improvement, and equipping of buildings, facilities, and other improvements at public junior colleges. *This bill died in committee.*
- **HB 245** (Author: Longoria): Relating to a classroom teacher's lunch period. *This bill died in committee.*
- **HB 810** (Author: White, James | et al.): Relating to employment of persons with professional qualifications as public school teachers. *This bill died in committee.*
- **HB 2543 (Author: Farney)/ SB 893 (Author: Seliger | et al.):** Relating to public school teacher performance appraisals, continuing education, professional development, career advancement, and compensation. *These bills died in committee.*

### ***We Thank***

Chris Custer, Sharon Gullett, Traci Jensen, Jim Johnson, Donna Kearley, Jennifer LaBoon, Leah Mann, Darrell Newsom, Danielle Plumer, Jeanne Standley, Robin Stout, Kyle Whipple, Jim Allison, Anne Keene, Ty Burns, Becky Calzada, Mayor Hal Richards, Jennifer Schwartz, Rebecca Sullivan, Tina Urdiales, and Cynthia Velis who appeared before the Senate Finance and House Appropriations Committees.

We also appreciate everyone who participated in Library Virtual Action Day and who traveled to Austin, including Lori Brix, Gene Mackenzie, Julie Ousley, Carol Roark, Rhoda Goldberg, and Kerry McGeath. We also thank the participants of Storming the Texas Capitol: Lucille Barnes, Katie Van Slightenhorst, Danna Wilson, David Thrash, Dawn Rapoza, Carolina Castillo, Libby Holtman, Susi Grissom, Melissa Perez, Jennifer Rike, Elizabeth Howard, JoAnn Conlon, Roslyn Grant, Dorcas Hand, Anita Patel, Laura Gregory, Maya McElroy, Danielle Plumer, Nancy Turner, Angela Hartman, Nancy Ditto, Faith Self, Donna Smith, Gene Mackenzie, Jennifer LaBoon, Rhoda Goldberg, and Rebecca Sullivan.

We thank our many members who set up meetings in home districts, including Rhea Lawson, Nicole Robinson, Roosevelt Weeks, Greg Simpson, Sue Ridnour, and Spencer Smith.

We thank those stalwart school librarians who participated in the State Board for Educator Certification's consideration of school library certification requirements. Our group successfully lobbied for the continuation of the two-year teaching requirement. They include the following. TEA/SBEC stakeholder group: Jane Claes, Elizabeth Philippi, Julie Briggs, Jennifer LaBoon, Becky Calzada, Dianna Jackson, Cristal Isaacks, Nicole Cruz, Len Bryan, and Janae Pierce. Individuals who

came to Austin to testify: Julie Briggs, Christine Van Hamersveld, Cindy Buchanan, Irene Kistler, and Wendy Hawk. We also offer our thanks to Leah Mann and Tracy Rutan (who traveled for both two dates when one meeting was cancelled), Robin Stout, and Donna Kearley.

We thank our participants in National Legislative Day: Rhoda Goldberg (coordinator), Rebecca Sullivan, Alex Simons, and Robin Stout.

We thank the members of TLA's Legislative Committee and all members who took the time to call, email, and make visits in support of library issues.

We sincerely appreciate the work and support of the Commissioners of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, State Librarian Mark Smith, and the staff at TSLAC.

We thank all of our legislative champions, including Representative Sylvester Turner, Chairman John Otto, Chairwoman Jane Nelson, Senator Lois Kolkhorst, Representative Larry Gonzales, Senator Juan Hinojosa, and all of the members of the Senate Finance Committee and House Appropriations Committee. We also offer our thanks to Rep. Jimmie Don Aycock, Rep. Senfronia Thompson, Sen. Judith Zaffirini, and Rep. John Zerwas for authoring legislative of critical interest to libraries and educational institutions.

There are many others to thank. As we all know, it takes a network of committed advocates and legislative leaders to make change happen. We are pleased that support for libraries took an important step forward.

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***Thank you for your support and passion for libraries.  
Texas libraries need your voice!***

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Texas Library Association  
3355 Bee Cave Road, Ste. 401  
Austin, TX 78748  
512-328-1518; 800-580-2852  
[www.txla.org](http://www.txla.org)

