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LLNE Letter to Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick

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November 9, 2009

Dear Governor Patrick:

It has come to our attention that the most recent Governor's budgetary proposal drastically cuts already reduced funding for the George Fingold Library (State Library of Massachusetts) to such a level that the library must close its doors. The drastically reduced funding and possible closing of the State Library of Massachusetts would have severe consequences for the Massachusetts Government and citizens of the Commonwealth who daily benefit, both directly and indirectly, from the library's large and valuable collections and important services.

I write today on behalf of the Law Librarians of New England (LLNE) which represents more than 400 law library personnel from Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont and Connecticut. Our members come from all segments of the legal community, including academic libraries, federal and state courts and agencies, county and public law libraries, corporate legal departments, publishers, vendors, bar associations, and private law firms. LLNE is a chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), a nonprofit education organization with over 5000 members nationwide. AALL members serve the information needs of the legal community and the public at more than 1900 academic, firm, state, court and county law libraries nationwide. AALL's mission is to promote and enhance the value of law libraries, to foster law librarianship and to provide leadership and advocacy in the field of legal information and information policy.

We are very concerned that severely reducing the funding of the State Library of Massachusetts so that it would be forced to close will negatively impact the work of the members of Massachusetts government that it primarily serves. In addition, it will negatively impact the huge number of members of the public, including law librarians and attorneys, who regularly need information on governmental workings, current and historical laws, and historical documents both in print and available online through the State Library's digitized collections.

The importance of the valuable collections and services of The State Library of Massachusetts cannot be underestimated. The State Library houses and preserves important historical documents such as the Bradford manuscript "Of Plimouth Plantation". The Library is the caretaker of unique genealogical research materials used not only by members of the public, but also by the judiciary and members of the bar. It provides access to the laws of the Commonwealth and trained staff who provide the personal expertise needed to help citizens, academics, members of the bench and bar, legislators and others to trace a state legislative history. The library staff has taken up the challenge to make their collections accessible not only by providing superior service in-house but by also providing remote access through the Internet to important digitized historical documents used by citizens throughout the state and beyond. Without continued funding these resources will disappear, our history will be left to molder and the public will be substantially poorer without the State Library.

We urge you to restore funding to the State Library of Massachusetts for FY 2010 and subsequent years to a realistic level needed to maintain and increase its collections and services. While we understand that difficult decisions have to be made during the current budget crisis, The State Library plays a vital role in meeting the day-to-day information needs of the Massachusetts Government, as well as the daily and long-term information needs of its citizenry. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Susan Drisko Zago
President
Law Librarians of New England