In addition, I want to say thank you to all MLA members. Even if you do not yet work with policy makers, your membership and participation with MLA makes you a part of the important process supporting library funding and the policies that allow you to serve your patrons. Your membership is why we are able to move forward on important issues such as tax capture relief.

Michigan Library Association has been working to find relief from tax capture for our libraries for more than two decades. Nearly four years ago when I came on board, it became a priority. Over the past 13 months, it has been a number one issue for MLA and Michigan libraries.

There are seven tax capture authorities that most significantly impact libraries. They exist by taking a portion of library and other special millages that were approved by the voters to go to the libraries or other entities. Often this has been going on for decades and without library support or taxpayer knowledge. In some cases, library millages have been defeated when the tax capture is disclosed in the ballot language.

Last year MLA, GCSI and senate staffers sat down and worked through numerous versions of the seven bills (SB 579 and SB 619-624) that now are waiting for action in the House Tax Policy Committee. Getting these bills to this point took the time and effort of many dedicated and engaged librarians as well as MLA staff and the lobbyists on our team. Dozens of meetings with legislators, targeted phone calls and emails from librarians to Senators and Representatives on the committees along with legal review were all part of the process.

The bills were introduced in the Senate Finance Committee where Senator Jack Brandenburg (R-Harrison Twp.) saw that they passed out of his committee and onto the Senate floor. In an unprecedented show of support to the library community, the Senate passed the bills 36 to 2. Next the bills went to the House Tax Policy Committee where they were held up while groups worked on a more comprehensive solution to all tax captures. Those bills have not made significant progress this year.

MLA and GCSI have been working on separate bills addressing libraries and tax capture because libraries are unique in that 98% of our funding is local. That means the dedicated special millages are critical to library funding and dollars being captured are essential.

On Wednesday, November 30, at the last regularly scheduled Tax Policy Committee Meeting of the year and of this legislative session, our bills will have a hearing. Committee members will hear testimony from librarians Lance Werner and Tammy Turgeon. In the meantime, librarians and your lobbyists have been talking with committee members sharing the important reasons these bills should become law.

Once the committee votes to send the bills to the House floor, we will ask you to contact your representative and request they support libraries by voting yes on the bills. After passage by the House, the bills will land on the Governor's desk for his signature. All this must be done by the end of 2016 or we start all over with new bills in January.

It can be confusing trying to understand how a bill becomes law but the best explanation remains with the 1970s video I'm just a Bill on Capitol Hill. If you've never watched it, take a minute and you'll come away with some insight. If you grew up watching Schoolhouse Rock it's a sweet moment of nostalgia. Either way you look at it, it highlights the fact that we have both rights and responsibilities to help establish the policies that govern our state and nation.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyeJ55o3El0

Happy Thanksgiving.

Advocacy Update Home

Back to news