

For Immediate Release

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Vermont Library Association Voices Concerns About Proposed Vermont Department of Libraries Budget Reduction

Governor Shumlin's proposed FY 2016 budget reduces funding for the Department of Libraries by nearly 20%, resulting in significant cuts to a department that provides important services to state government and local public libraries. The Vermont Library Association is deeply concerned about the potential impacts these cuts will have on public libraries around the state and the communities they serve. As Department of Libraries staff navigate the incredibly difficult work of determining which services to discontinue, a troubling picture is emerging.

The Vermont State Law Library is now slated for elimination. If this change goes through, Vermont will be one of the few states in the nation without a state public law library, with minimal alternative resources available to the general public. We may very well find ourselves providing the least public access to legal information resources of any state. The law library is currently used by Vermont attorneys, clerks, state agencies, organizations, prisoners and private citizens as a valuable resource and support to our state's legal system.

Significantly more cuts will need to be made to meet the proposed target, and these cuts will surely result in a loss of federal funding with dramatic impacts to local libraries and the communities they serve. The Department of Libraries administers the nearly \$1,000,000 "Grants to States" program of federal LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Twenty of the DOL's 26 staff positions are funded in part by these resources. As services diminish and we fail to meet matching requirements for receipt of federal funding, the DOL is projecting a spiraling loss of federal funds and staffing that extends far beyond the FY 2016 budget cycle.

With the help of this federal funding, the Department of Libraries provides many services to Vermonters and their libraries. These include:

- A statewide summer reading program for kids delivered by public libraries.
- Special services to the visually and physically impaired.
- Access for all Vermonters to the Vermont Online Library, a suite of databases with language-learning, health information, genealogy, newspaper and magazine articles. The Vermont Online Library is used in public, academic and school libraries across the state.

- Statewide exchange of materials among libraries through a robust interlibrary loan service.
- Access to federal and state documents, historic VT newspapers, reference materials and legal resources for the public at the Vermont State Library.
- Support for the Vermont Early Literacy Initiative.
- Support or sponsorship of three student-selected statewide books awards for children and teens: Red Clover Award, Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award, and Green Mountain Book Award.
- Continuing education and training available to librarians at all 183 public libraries in Vermont, including a rigorous certification program for librarians.
- Consulting services for librarians.
- And much more.

The Vermont Library Association is concerned about how these cuts will affect libraries statewide and the services they provide to all Vermonters. The Department of Libraries provides a strong network across the state and is instrumental in pulling Vermonters together, whether facilitating statewide awareness of projects such as Vermont Health Connect and broadband internet access or providing resources to libraries in times of crisis, as they helped libraries become community centers of information and support for victims of Tropical Storm Irene. We urge lawmakers to take this opportunity to fully acquaint themselves with the work of the Department of Libraries and of Vermont's public libraries, so they can fully understand the important contributions that libraries make to early childhood development, literacy, technology, economic development, and the health and well-being of Vermonters.

The Vermont Library Association (VLA) is an educational organization working to develop, promote, and improve library and information services and librarianship in the state of Vermont. Our membership is comprised of Vermont librarians, library workers, and library trustees.

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