

National Library Legislative Day 2008



KEY ISSUES FOR RHODE ISLANDERS

LSTA

- Support full funding for the **Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)** at \$214.432 million. Allocated by a formula including a base rate and a population increment, LSTA funds large states preferentially to small ones. With its small and declining population RI will experience small and declining LSTA funding until the Act is fully funded.
- In Rhode Island, LSTA provides more than ½ of the funding for the state Office of Library and Information Services, that coordinated library efforts statewide and fills in the gap where state scale makes a difference. Special projects like the *Getting Ready for Kindergarten Calendar* are supported by LSTA. Just over \$1 million at the current funding level, RI's LSTA funds are highly leveraged to produce enormously greater value in library and information services to the state. For the first time in many years, however, Rhode Island will have no funds for subgrants in FY2009; i.e., no seed money for literacy programs, further development of the school library network RILINK, or creative new library endeavors. Full funding would mean over \$100,000 more leveraged to add library services value in RI.

School Libraries

- Fund **Improving Literacy Through School Libraries** at \$100 million. This grant program has been critical to building the Rhode Island Library Network for Kids (RILINK) that now interconnects school library media programs serving 34% of RI school students and desperately needing to grow.
- The inclusion of the **Strengthening Kids' Interest in Learning and Libraries (SKILLs) Act** in the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires school districts to ensure that every district employs at least one state-certified library media specialist in each school library. Although the Rhode Island Department of Education, unlike many state education agencies, certifies School Library Media Specialists, there is little recognition of the different and equally (if not for some students more) critical skill set taught in the library media program as opposed to the classroom. As district budgets tighten, school districts turn to their libraries for relief.

NATIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE – TALKING BOOKS PLUS

- Adequately fund the National Library Service for the Blind process of switching the talking books and associated playback equipment from four-track cassette tapes to digital (USB) flash memory cartridges. NLS estimates the cost of transition is \$76.4 million, over a four-year period, and the Library of Congress received only \$12.5 million of the \$19.1 million requested in FY 2008. RI's Talking Books Plus serves over 3,000 people and 50 institutions with NLS cassette tapes and machines.

NETWORK NEUTRALITY

- Net Neutrality online non-discrimination. It is the principle that consumers/citizens should be free to get access to - or to provide - the Internet content and services they wish, and that consumer access should not be regulated based on the nature or source of that content or service. Rhode Islanders and their libraries increasingly depend on the Internet to disseminate and discover needed information. Net neutrality will ensure equal access to that information regardless of its source.

