

**Ohio Library Council
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

ITEM NO.: **6.E.1**

MEETING DATE: **Mar. 14, 2025**

SUBJECT: **Government and Legal
Services Report**

SUBMITTED BY: **Jay Smith**

REPORT FOR INFORMATION

PLF Update

The Ohio Department of Taxation (ODT) posted the March 2025 Public Library Fund (PLF) distribution of \$37,744,508 – which is \$887,936 (or - 2.30%) below ODT’s original estimate that was issued in July 2024; and \$620,326 (or + 1.67%) above ODT’s updated estimate issued in December 2024.

According to the Office of Budget and Management (OBM), total General Revenue Fund (GRF) tax receipts for the month of February came in \$93.9 million (- 4.2%) below estimate with three of the four major categories failing to meet expectations. The Commercial Activity Tax underperformed by 9.4% and the Personal Income Tax collections came in 5.4% below estimates.

A look at the PLF distribution for the past three years and a link to an Excel spreadsheet listing each county’s distribution total for March 2025 can be found on the [OLC website](#).

HB 96 State Budget Update

Thank you to everyone who has reached out to their Ohio House Member. While we are hearing some positive feedback and responses from some House offices regarding library funding in the FY 2026-2027 State Budget (HB 96), it is important that we continue communicating with legislators. We cannot let a small minority shape the future of our libraries or control the narrative. It’s crucial that we continue to share our story – use the [Talking Points](#) and use the [Advocacy Action Plan](#).

If you have not already done so, we are asking library directors, trustees, and fiscal officers to email or call your member(s) of the Ohio House. A directory is available at [ohiohouse.gov](#). At this time, we are NOT asking other library staff and/or patrons to make contacts. Should that be necessary, we'll let you know but we are not at that level of response.

Please use the following talking points on the state budget:

- State funding for public libraries was cut by almost \$27 million in calendar year 2024.
- We are currently receiving the same level of state funding that we received 25 years ago (Year 2000) with no adjustment for inflation.
- Restore the Public Library Fund to 2%.
- Public libraries are different from schools and other local governments:
 - No County Sales Tax
 - No City Income Tax
 - No Casino Revenue
 - No Funding for Facilities in Capital Budget

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- No ARPA Funds
- No Inside Millage

More will be discussed at the board meeting.

HB 137 Levy Authority

Recently, legislation was introduced by Rep. [Brian Lorenz](#) (R-Powell) that would allow taxing authorities to deny public libraries access to the ballot.

HB 137 would allow a library taxing authority to decide not to move forward with a library levy request. This means they could prevent public libraries from going to the ballot and deny voters a say in their local property taxes. HB 137 would give sole discretion to a library's taxing authority with regards to moving a levy request to the county board of elections. HB 137 [Bill Language](#)

OLC is strongly opposed to this legislation and has reached out to Rep. Lorenz for a meeting. However, we DO want library directors, fiscal officers and trustees to contact only their Ohio House Member and [Rep. Lorenz](#) on this legislation and to express strong opposition. [Contacts](#) can be made by phone, email or U.S. mail.

Contacts: Only Library Directors, Fiscal Officers and Trustees. We do NOT need patrons or other library staff making contacts on this bill yet.

Message/Talking Points:

- Ohioans love their public libraries and strongly support them at the ballot.
- Over the past 15 years, 92% of Ohio Public Library Levies have passed.
- 203 of Ohio's 251 library systems (81%) have a levy and rely on that support to supplement their state funding.
- HB 137 could prevent public libraries from going to the ballot and deny voters a say in their local property taxes.
- HB 137 would give sole discretion to a library's taxing authority with regards to moving a levy request to the county board of elections.
- Not all library boundaries match the boundaries of their taxing authority. This means there could be elected officials denying taxpayers the ability to vote if they are outside of their jurisdiction. We have several library systems that have service areas in multiple counties and multiple school districts.

While communicating with your House members, it should be noted that OLC is strongly opposed to this bill. At this time, we do not know what sort of traction this bill will get as the House is primarily focused on the State Budget.

HB 28 Replacement Levies

The House Ways and Means Committee is currently having hearings on House Bill (HB) 28. If passed, HB 28 will eliminate the option for a political subdivision, including libraries, to seek a replacement property tax levy. The bill is sponsored by Reps. Adam Mathews (R-Lebanon) and Thomas Hall (R-Middletown). OLC opposed similar legislation during the last general assembly and will continue to oppose the proposal in HB 28 during the 136th General Assembly.

COSLA Voices Event

OLC recently participated in a fly-in event in Washington DC with the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies. After participating in a legislative briefing, Ohio's delegation headed up by the State Library, met with most of Ohio's congressional offices on issues related to Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), broadband access, and all the great services offered by Ohio's public libraries.

Regional Trustee Dinners Scheduled

The program will focus on how library trustees and administrators can be effective advocates, especially as the Ohio legislature focuses its attention on the FY26-27 state budget. OLC staff will share the most up-to-date information on the budget process, its implications for the Public Library Fund, and offer guidance on how library leaders can effectively engage in the discussion. Register for the Trustee event near you on OLC website.

Trustee Dinner Events:

- [March 20, 2025](#) | Eastern Ohio Trustee Dinner, Guernsey County Public Library (Crossroads Branch), Cambridge
- [April 3, 2025](#) | Northwest Ohio Trustee Dinner, Stone Ridge Golf Club, Bowling Green
- [May 8, 2025](#) | Northeast Ohio Trustee Dinner, Embassy Suites Cleveland Rockside, Independence

Trustee Lunch Event:

- [April 24, 2025](#) | Southwest Ohio Trustee Lunch, MidPointe Library, West Chester

Legal Webinar on Virtual Meetings Law

On March 17 at 2pm, OLC will be hosting a free legal webinar on virtual meetings requirements. HB 257 passed during the lame duck session last year and will become effective on April 9. However, certain requirements and actions need to be taken by a library's board of trustees prior to hosting a virtual meeting or having members participate in a meeting virtually. During the webinar, OLC staff will provide background information on the legislation and OLC's legal counsel will review a sample policy and discuss what public library boards need to consider before adopting a policy.

OLC Library Legislative Day on April 8

Legislative Day is your day at the Statehouse. It's an opportunity for you to come to Columbus, meet with your legislators, and advocate on behalf of Ohio's public libraries. The OLC will host morning briefings, displays in the Statehouse Rotunda, and lunch with legislators in the Statehouse Atrium.

Legislative Day falls within National Library Week (April 6-12, 2025). It's the perfect time to share the essential work your library is doing!

To help you prepare for this important advocacy event, Jay Smith, OLC's Director of Government and Legal Services, will host a free webinar on Thursday, March 27 from 2-3 p.m. He will provide the latest information from the Statehouse, key steps to take before Legislative Day, and key talking points to use with legislators.

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