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## **State Librarians 'Deeply Disappointed' by President Obama's Freeze on Library Funding**

(Lexington, KY) - When times are tough, Americans turn to their public libraries. And citizens are turning to these community resource centers in record numbers during the current economic recession. That's why the nation's State Librarians were disappointed by President Obama's FY2011 budget, which proposes keeping federal library funding at last year's level.

"With the economy in dire straits, our public libraries are seeing some of their highest use ever," according to Susan McVey, president of the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) and director of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. "Needless to say, we are deeply disappointed by the President's budget proposal."

Public libraries are in the front lines of helping citizens during the economic downturn, and McVey said COSLA hears stories from across the country about the important roles libraries play.

"Libraries provide free Internet access necessary to apply for jobs, file for unemployment and other benefits, and access information that is vital to survive in today's environment."

McVey said libraries have seen double digit increases in computer use, circulation, and building use during the past two years.

"At the same time, many libraries are seeing their local and state funding cut," she said. "Increased federal funding would extend a lifeline to the people libraries serve."

COSLA has been working with the American Library Association to support a significant increase to the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) to assist during the downturn. LSTA is the primary source of federal support for libraries.

"A substantial increase would help our libraries meet the growing public demand for services," she said. "In addition, it would fund access to electronic resources to help Americans find jobs, write resumes, submit applications and practice for employment exams. These resources would be available in the nation's libraries and directly to anyone with an Internet connection, regardless of where they live in the country."

McVey said COSLA is asking Congress to really help their constituents by investing in libraries and increasing federal funding.

"The return on investment in libraries is a dramatic one," she said. "Libraries are engines of the recovery and we need to have increased federal support so they can help their communities even more. Now is not the time to short change our libraries and the citizens who depend on them."

COSLA is an independent organization of the chief officers of state and territorial agencies designated as the state library administrative agency and responsible for statewide library development. COSLA's mission is to identify issues of common concern and national interest, to further state library agency relationships with the federal government and national organizations, and to initiate, maintain and support cooperative action for the improvement of library services. COSLA offers to its membership mutual support and the opportunity through group action to influence federal policy and national organizations. COSLA promotes its leadership role in the library community and with other organizations of state officials in order to affect policy of importance to library and information delivery. COSLA is a dynamic diverse organization, which encourages open discussion of issues.

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