



Balance Today, Balance Tomorrow FY 2016 Budget

Maryland public libraries can consider themselves very lucky this year as we flew under the radar during a contentious legislative session. After several years of flat funding and budget cuts that resulted in reduced hours, layoffs and furloughs for several systems throughout the state, public libraries will see a modest increase in state funding for fiscal year 2016. In fact, many state agencies suffered mid-year cuts in fiscal year 2015, but not public libraries. Public libraries also maintained their \$5 million capital budget which funds new construction and renovation projects. Likewise the State Library Resource Center maintained their funding for the long awaited renovation of the Enoch Pratt Central Library in Baltimore. This is due in no small measure to the years spent building relationships in Annapolis and advocating for libraries particularly by the Maryland Library Association's Legislative Panel and administrators and friends throughout the state.

Public libraries are still not out-of-the woods. County and city budgets continue to suffer the effects of the "great recession" and the federal sequestering in 2013, as well as population loss in the more rural counties. However, public libraries remain cautiously optimistic that better days are ahead and that the value Maryland's libraries bring to the state will continue to be appreciated and supported.

If you are interested in finding out more about how the state budget negotiations directly affect you and your system please talk to your administrators. They will be glad to talk with you and to let you know what you can do to help advocate for your library.