

From: Montana Listserv [<mailto:WIRED-MT-L@OCLC.ORG>] **On Behalf Of** Stapp, Jennie
Sent: Wednesday, January 25, 2017 1:53 PM
To: WIRED-MT-L@OCLC.ORG
Subject: Legislative Update: January 25, 2017

Dear staff, Commissioners, and State Library supporters,

We've reached day 18 of the 65th Legislature and it's been a busy couple of weeks!

Our **budget hearing** was held a week ago and it was one of the most positive budget hearings I can remember. We were joined by Commissioners Bruce Newell and Connie Eissinger. MLA representatives, John Finn and Nanette Gilbertson testified in support of the State Library budget. I was honored and humbled by the number of librarians and trustees who were also there to show their support. The nature and tone of the questions asked by members of the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee for Education were very positive; I felt as if the questions were asked in order for us to express the importance of our work in the most positive light. What else can we ask for?

As the Legislature began their work, the Appropriation Subcommittees adopted global motions that reduced agencies' operating budgets by 5%. For us, this amount is as was proposed by the Governor in his budget. The Legislature also adopted an additional 2% vacancy savings requirement for all agencies that are subject to vacancy savings. During my testimony I spoke about the impacts of this reduction as outlined in the Commission's [plan](#) as well as the hardship on our staff when we have to leave positions vacant for significant periods of time to generate vacancy savings. Our subcommittee is currently scheduled to take executive action on the State Library budget sometime the week of February 6.

The **state's budget** continues to be the biggest topic of the legislature to date. Committees are hearing a couple of companion bills that work in conjunction with House Bill 2, the state budget bill. Senate Bill 95 would transfer funds from other accounts to the General Fund. This bill has been amended and is currently tabled though it will likely be taken from the table as the budget process continues. House Bill 3 would reduce FY 17 expenditures, saving money this fiscal year to improve the overall state budget balance sheet. As the Joint Appropriations Subcommittees wrap up their work in mid-February we will have a better picture of the status of the state's budget and any further implications

We had a wonderful **Library Legislative Night** on January 18. The event was attended by more than 150 people including more than half of Montana Legislators and the Lieutenant Governor. Librarians, library trustees, and members of the GIS Community from every corner of Montana were there to talk about the importance of the work we do. An exciting new feature of this year's event was the use of Facebook Live to capture and stream videos of attendees talking about why they love libraries. If you haven't seen these videos, check them out on the [State Library Facebook page](#). You're in for a treat! We hope you'll share the videos via social media to continue our effort to support libraries.

Turning your attention to House Bill 261, our **State Aid Legislation**, we had a very positive hearing yesterday before the House Appropriations Committee. Rep. Frank Garner, from the Flathead Valley, is an incredible champion for this bill. The Montana Library community has really come out in force to support this legislation. We need to thank Montana libraries for contributing such wonderful photos and stories about the importance of the state aid funding. I hope you've all seen the flyers MSL staff created with this information. We are sharing them far and wide. Members of the House Appropriations Committee received personalized handouts yesterday using the information supplied by their libraries and the images are being shared via Facebook and Twitter. Again, I encourage you to share them, especially with your legislators.

I also want to acknowledge John Finn, Kim Crowley, and Mark Wetherington for offering their testimony for HB 261 yesterday. The [heartwarming testimony](#) they shared about their service to their communities was incredibly compelling and I believe was very well received. With this hearing behind us, the work to ensure we have the necessary votes to pass the legislation begins. We are working hard to be strategic in our approach to communication to legislatures to insure that the communication is well-received and timely. *When John reaches out to you, asking you to contact your legislators, we need you to act!* As I've said many times, our success in passing this legislation is up to all of us! I

We continue to watch and respond to information requests on other bills as they are being considered including bills on privacy from our 2016 Library Champion, Rep. Daniel Zolnikov. I was also incredibly proud of John and Nanette who testified in support of **House Joint Resolution 4** which calls for a study of coal severance tax funding. It can be very scary to contemplate a new economic future and yet I can think of no greater need that we face as a State. As the only proponents of this legislation, Montana libraries continue to lead the way.

The State Library is also serving as an informational witness for **House Bill 61**, the Next Generation 911 legislation. It, too, is being carried by Rep. Garner. He is supporting it with the same level of professionalism and determination as HB 261. All those who testified during the hearing for this legislation agree that the bill is necessary and that it takes very positive steps towards modernizing the State's 911 system. Stakeholders are working through a handful of last minute amendments. Though the funding for this bill has been in question due to proposals originally contained in SB 95, with that bill tabled, we anticipate that the House Energy, Technology, and Federal Relations committee will soon take executive action on the bill.

Through the long-range planning bills, the Legislature is also considering how to fund management of aquatic invasive species. Though not named in any legislation, **the Montana Natural Heritage Program** has been included in discussions about how best to make use of those monies to manage the data necessary to do this work effectively. Legislators have expressed strong support for this need and we currently await action on those bills as well.

Finally, for those of you who are monitoring **House Bill 13**, the State Pay Plan bill, that bill has been introduced and referred to the House Appropriations Committee, but it has not yet been scheduled for a hearing.

As always, I am always available to answer questions about this information and, if I haven't provided an update for something that you'd like more information about, please do let me know and I'll do my best to respond.

Thank you so much for your support.

Jennie

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