

## **Statement Concerning Legislative Accountability**

The following letter was mailed to each member of the New York State Legislature in early February, 2010:

The New Yorkers for Better Libraries Political Action Committee (NYLIBS-PAC) was formed eight years ago by library advocates who believe that state support for library services is essential to all New Yorkers.

We are very disappointed that libraries have received four cuts in state aid in the past 21 months, with a fifth cut now under consideration. These reductions have sent state aid for libraries back to the same level received in 1998. We understand that New York State is experiencing financial difficulties and are aware that many vital services must sustain cuts. However, there has to be some equity in this process: libraries have been cut disproportionately when compared to other state services. The state budget has increased by 82% over the past ten years. Libraries did not benefit from this. In the past six years, school aid has increased by 47% and aid to municipalities has increased by 62%, but library aid has reverted to the dollar amount received a dozen years ago.

A core recipient of state aid are our library systems, which serve all types of libraries and are the backbone for the collaborative efforts and resource sharing programs that make libraries one of the most cost-effective services provided to the public.

NYLIBS-PAC has determined that there is a need for greater accountability concerning state legislators' actions on issues of importance to the library community and the millions of library users and voters throughout the state.

Effective this Legislative Session, the NYLIBS-PAC will begin to track library-related state legislation and will publish a report card/voters guide concerning each state legislator's degree of support for libraries. Sponsorship and co-sponsorship of legislation, votes on library legislation and funding will be the primary indicators that the PAC will assess. This report card will be distributed to libraries throughout the state, the media and the general public.

We look forward to working with you during this Legislative Session to address the needs of New York's libraries.