

DALL

Dallas Association of Law Librarians



February 22, 2011

The Honorable Steve Ogden
Chair, Finance Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711

The Honorable Jim Pitts
Chair, Appropriations Committee
Room CAP 1W.02, Capitol
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa
Vice-Chair, Finance Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711

The Honorable Sylvester Turner
Vice-Chair, Appropriations Committee
Room CAP 1W.06, Capitol
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

Dear Chairman Ogden, Chairman Pitts, Vice-Chairman Hinojosa and Vice-Chairman Turner:

On behalf of the Dallas Association of Law Librarians (DALL), Houston Area Law Librarians (HALL) and Southwestern Association of Law Libraries (SWALL), we are writing to express our concern about the proposal in HB 1 and SB 1 to eliminate funding for the Texas State Law Library. Closure of the Texas State Law Library will have a serious negative impact on state agency staff, the courts, members of the public, attorneys and others who rely on the law library to access the important legal information they need. While we understand the difficult decisions you must make in these challenging economic times, the State Law Library serves a unique mission and is vital to ensuring that all Texans have access to justice.

DALL, HALL and SWALL represent more than 350 law librarians and information professionals in Texas. Our chapters are members of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), a nonprofit educational organization with more than 5000 members nationwide. AALL members serve the needs of the legal community and the public at more than 1900 academic, firm, state, court and county law libraries.

The Texas State Law Library provides research services to a wide range of users and acts as a centralized research facility for the Office of the Attorney General and state agency staff. The professional staff of the law library are trained to find information quickly and efficiently. Without the expertise of these highly skilled law librarians, the state government and courts will be forced to conduct their own legal research. This will ultimately come at a greater cost to the

state because agencies will be forced to purchase or otherwise obtain access to research materials.

The State Law Library also plays a unique role in helping disadvantaged and pro se litigants who, without the law library, may be unable to access official legal resources. State Law Library staff help citizens understand the law and find the up-to-date legal information they need. These services are increasingly valuable as more people turn to self-representation when they face difficult circumstances such as layoffs, foreclosures, and legal penalties. Public libraries simply do not have the resources or staff expertise to guide users through the complex legal system.

In addition, the Texas State Law Library provides attorneys with the resources necessary to help them perform their jobs. The law library maintains a collection of core legal materials, as well as an historical collection of statutes, regulations, and treatises that are not otherwise readily available.

Closure of the Texas State Law Library will severely limit access to justice and place a greater burden on state agency staff, the courts, members of the public, attorneys and others who need access to up-to-date legal information. We encourage you to consider alternatives to closing the library, and we would be happy to work with you to develop solutions. Thank you very much for your consideration in this important matter.

Sincerely,



Terri L. DiCenzo JD, MLS
President
Dallas Association of Law Librarians



Natalie Lira
President
Houston Area Law Librarians



Michelle Rigual
President
Southwestern Association of Law Libraries