

Not long after reviewing the results of the survey, MLA and our GCSI lobbyists met with Senator Jack Brandenburg (R-Harrison Twp.) who agreed that dedicated library millages should fund libraries, period. It took months of work as MLA and the legislative committee crafted language that would be the basis for the seven tax capture bills SB 579, SB 619-624 now awaiting House Tax Policy Committee action.

Many meetings and countless hours of work on the part of MLA, GCSI and legislative committee members went into the bills. Early this year the bills were introduced and passed quickly out of the Senate Finance Committee chaired by Senator Brandenburg. Librarians Lance Werner and Larry Neal testified in committee and provided answers to the committee's questions.

In an unprecedented feat for library funding support, the bills were passed by the full Senate 36 to 2. That meant that nearly every Senator in the state of Michigan voted yes to support library funding. Now the bills are sitting in the House Tax Policy Committee waiting for a hearing. We are optimistic that will happen soon after the legislature returns from summer break. However, with every House seat up for election in November and the resulting lame duck session to follow, it will likely be an unpredictable and exasperating fall.

As soon as the bills see action, we will be calling on you to contact your representatives and ask them to vote yes on the package. However, you do not have to wait for fall to connect with your policy makers. When speaking with them throughout the summer be sure to ask them to support the bills when they make it to the House floor. Explain how important it is that dedicated library millages remain with the library.

Libraries are unique in how they are supported and millages are critical to library funding.

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On average, 78% of library funding comes from locally dedicated special library millages.

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Voters go to the polls and choose to support their libraries by approving a dedicated library millage.

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These locally dedicated taxes — approved by voters for library funding — are being captured against the libraries' choice often without the locally voting taxpayer's knowledge or approval.

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Libraries should have the option of participating in tax captures. The tax captures should be transparent in their activities, explain their value to library boards and then request an opt-in from libraries.

Watch for a call to action this fall. And, as always, I encourage you to connect with your Senators and Representatives. Your goal is to create meaningful relationships so lawmakers know who they can count on for clear and accurate input about libraries and their patrons.

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