



WRapper Newsletter

WMRLS Services are provided through state funds administered by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC)

Effect of Elimination of the State Income Tax on WMRLS and Libraries

by John Ramsay, Regional Administrator, WMRLS

People have been asking about the impact on WMRLS and its member libraries if Ballot Question 1 passes on Election Day, November 4, and is implemented by the legislature. This question calls for the repeal of the state income tax, phased in over a two year period.

In response, this action would be disastrous for libraries, the most detrimental action ever threatened. It is almost definite that it would eliminate the six Regional Library Systems, the State Aid to Public Libraries program, access to statewide databases, State and federal grants, and library services for the blind and disabled. There would be no staff at the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) to administer grants for the Public Library Construction program. The automated networks, like C/W MARS, would be severely weakened without any offsets for their telecommunications costs, no grants to upgrade their systems, and member libraries unable to pay annual membership fees. In short, Question 1 would put an end to all the important advances in library services and interlibrary cooperation that have evolved over the past century.

On September 5, the MBLC voted the following statement:

Be it resolved that as the primary stewards of library service for all residents of the Commonwealth, the Board of Library Commissioners opposes Question 1 on the basis that its enactment would have a severe impact on all types of libraries in Massachusetts and would result especially in an overwhelming and wholly destructive loss of public library services that are fundamental to the educational, social and economic well-being of all residents of the Commonwealth.

The Massachusetts Library Association (MLA) has joined forces with the "Coalition for Our Communities," a wide-ranging network of organizations that has joined together to fight Question 1. The Coalition's Website is <http://votenoquestion1.com>. In an email to the statewide library lists, MLA "urges its membership not only to Vote No on Question 1, but also to take steps to educate others about the impact that this initiative would have on library service in their communities and statewide. MLA will be advocating against this referendum, and also urges its members to take a personal interest in this cause and do the same."

The Western Massachusetts Field Leader for the Coalition for our Communities is Pam Schwartz, 413/219-5658, pschwartz@coalitionforourcommunities.org

Let there be no doubt that Question 1 would be extremely bad for libraries and the people of the Commonwealth.

If Ballot Question 1 passes it would be disastrous for libraries, the most detrimental action ever threatened.