

NOTICE FROM NSLS  
May 11, 2010

Dear NSLS Members and Colleagues,

I have sad but significant news. Due to our budget situation, NSLS will be dramatically scaling back programs and services effective May 30, 2010.

As you are aware, 80% of our funding comes from an annual grant from the Illinois General Assembly distributed through Sec. of State Jesse White's office. We have not received 42% of the money owed to us for the fiscal year ending June, 30. If we continue to operate without making any service or staffing changes, our money would run out at the end of July 2010. We had hoped to receive additional funding soon, but our latest intelligence tells us that we are not likely to receive any state payments until November 2010 at the earliest. We are told this is not a temporary problem. Rather, there is a trend in Illinois to continue to delay state payments, not just to library systems. This means that cash flow is going to be a continuing and growing problem for NSLS, as well as many other state funded agencies and organizations. Under these conditions, we cannot continue to offer our members the high level of service they expect and deserve.

As you can imagine, this was a very difficult decision to make. But I would not be fulfilling my responsibility as NSLS Executive Director or the System's responsibility to our members as a whole if we did not take serious and immediate action to help preserve what is left of our budget.

To remind you how we got here, Illinois library systems have not had a budget increase in 20 years. On top of this flat funding, last August, we received a 16 ½% budget cut. Since we had just received our final payment from the previous fiscal year, we were already working under a deficit but at that time we did not recognize that cash flow would become more disabling than flat funding and budget reductions. Despite this bleak situation, we were determined to fight to ensure that systems did not receive any additional cuts. We initiated two statewide campaigns, one targeted at legislators and the other targeted at Governor Quinn and Comptroller Hynes. More recently, we initiated a campaign to inspire public library boards to contact Secretary of State, Jesse White, to ask for the release of the Live and Learn funds for regional library systems. I have also contacted our area legislators personally to see if they could do anything to help us. We achieved some results from these efforts, but it wasn't enough.

I am confident that we have done everything possible to turn this situation around. Unfortunately, we have run out of options. Other Illinois library systems are on different time lines as to when they will run out of money, but they are also in trouble.

Many thanks to all who have participated in our campaigns, contacted legislators or offered help or solace during this crisis. I am very grateful for your support. We will keep you posted regarding the details of this change as well as additional changes to System services and staffing.

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Long