

SOUTH DAKOTA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Legislative Report

The 2004 South Dakota Legislature Session provided the Library Association the opportunity to actively support legislation directly relating to a topic which was a centerpiece of the Association's agenda. Your lobbyists found that the "Key Contact" system the Association has implemented worked well. We also found that our legislative efforts need to find a "key" supporter among Republican legislators in the House and Senate. While we do not want to make our issues politically partisan, we do need to develop a "key player" in the Republican caucus. The reality is the Republicans control the legislature. This needs to be a centerpiece of our summer discussions.

House Bill #1119 went directly to the Appropriations Committee where Joe Edelen offered testimony in favor of a separate appropriation for the EBSCO data base. Our strategy at the hearing was to request an appropriation for the EBSCO system in addition to funding for the current data base(s) utilized by the State Library. Joe was encouraged not to readily concede to a suggestion to simply trade the EBSCO data base funding for the current funding for a separate and possibly less desirable data base, even if this were a position we ultimately would accept. Joe did an outstanding job of testifying and very importantly raised the stature of your Association in the eyes of the Legislature and the Department of Education. A thank you to Joe is in order.

House Bill #1177 was also vigorously supported by the Association. This bill was sponsored to repeal a fairly onerous provision passed in the 2003 session which prevented public entities from purchasing from any retailer who failed to collect and remit sales tax. This had caused a lot of consternation and expense to public entities. A thank you to the prime sponsor, Representative Elizabeth Krause, would be in order.

House Bill #1119 unfortunately did not pass the Appropriation Committee. Realistically in this year when there were significant tax cuts in the form of the trucking tax and limited sales tax repeal on food and the State needed to again dig into the reserves to balance the State budget, chances of gaining money for the EBSCO data base in addition to maintaining the current data bases may have been too optimistic. However, while not wishing to have this considered as "spin," I firmly believe the Library Association accomplished several important goals this session.

First, the Association established itself as an aggressive participant with goals to achieve and a plan to achieve those goals. This was accomplished by the visible appearance of your members testifying at the legislature, your lobbyists working within the process and the work of your members on key contacts. I had a number of positive comments from legislators on the contacts they received from your members.

Second, the Department of Education agreed to fund the EBSCO data base and importantly to consult with the Library Association on this decision and on future issues relating to libraries. The Association needs to prepare to meet this challenge of being "brought to the table" by

having a core group of officers and/or members ready and willing to meet with the Department of Education. I believe this is a very important accomplishment -- the establishment of your Association as an entity to which the Department of Education will look to for advice on issues relating to libraries.

A follow-up letter has been sent to the Department of Education by Dennis Nath to insure the Department is aware of the Association's continued interest in participating in such discussions. It is important that the Association follow through on this opportunity and participate in any discussions to which they are invited and to leave the Department of Education with the impression the Association is one of the parties whose opinions should be sought on library issues. This effort should not be seen as diminishing the role the State Library plays in being a voice within the Department on library issues, but rather complimenting the role of the State Library.

I am of the opinion we accomplished important goals this session by our active role in the legislative process. From the pre-session contacts to the future meeting with the Department of Education, your Association is being recognized as an entity whose members desire to play a role in development of policy and goals for the libraries of this State.

Finally, I receive many positive comments on the legislative reception. It is an event the Association should continue. Thank you's should also be sent to the sponsors of HB #1119. I can provide the names and addresses if necessary. The thank you would best come from their key contact to maintain that continued relationship. As an aside, I must confess to never losing a prime sponsor to a bill, i.e. Senator Larry Diedrich, by reason of a legislative resignation. I guess it goes to show you never stop learning in this process. Seriously, I do believe this hurt our efforts on HB #1119.

Thank you for the support of the Association. We both hope to continue our relationship with the Association and improve what we accomplished this year.

Dennis Duncan
Larry Nelson