

WLA Legislative Committee Report

The Legislative Committee held a planning retreat in Casper in June. Attending were Cara Nett, Kate Mutch, Sid Stanfill, Megan Bienz-Dingman, Isabel Zumel, Cameron Duff, Lori Phillips, Richard Landreth, Carey Hartmann Lesley Boughton, Marian Schulz, and guests Bill Nelson and Lucie Osborn.

The date for the Legislative reception was announced: Thursday, January 22, 2015, at the Wyoming State Library in Cheyenne.

Speakers for the Legislative Luncheon at conference were discussed. The group settled upon candidates for the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The committee unanimously decided to explore a possible extension of the Wyoming Library Endowment Challenge Program, which is due to expire June 30, 2017, at which time unclaimed funds in the Challenge Program will revert to the general fund.

After the June meeting, public library directors were surveyed to determine if they had specific plans to meet their goals by 2017, and whether they and their boards would support legislation to at the very least enable the library community to have access to all funds currently available through the program, and possibly expand the scope and/or duration of the program.

Simultaneous to the survey, we sought specific feedback from legislators in both the House and the Senate about how we might proceed, and received some concrete advice about how to extend the program, and possibly make it permanent.

The committee proposed the following to public library directors and their boards in August:

1. The committee will work with the WLA lobbyist to introduce legislation that would change the current sunset date, either setting a new ending date or making the program ongoing.
2. Legislation will be modified to allow partnerships between libraries for the purposes of attaining matching funds. Under the partnership plan, each individual library would retain funds raised; the state match would be divided equally between partners.
3. The partnership program would be entirely voluntary. Individual libraries could choose whether or not they want to partner with another library. Nothing in the revised legislation would prevent individual libraries from continuing to raise funds and seek a match on their own. Any revised legislation would maintain the 1:1, 2:1 and 3:1 matches, so individual libraries could continue to reap full benefits from independent fund raising.

The committee tried to propose a solution that allows libraries that want to partner to do so, without requiring partnership. The committee is currently working with county librarians and their boards to answer questions about the proposal.

The committee is also exploring the issue of certified librarians in school libraries, and their impact upon student learning. The committee is strategizing about how to provide this information to legislators and encourage them to think about impacts in their local school districts, and statewide.

Submitted by Lori Phillips

Chair, WLA Legislative Committee

September 22, 2014