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## From the President

JoEllen Ostendorf

*Troup-Harris Regional Library System*, [jostendorf@thclibrary.net](mailto:jostendorf@thclibrary.net)

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## *From the* PRESIDENT

Librarians must be eternal optimists! We are once again in the midst of a tumultuous legislative session, and once again we remain ever hopeful that this year our ship will dock! It must be one of our best qualities. Public libraries were ecstatic last year when we received \$2 million in additional dollars for books that almost put us back to where we were before the budget cuts four years ago. Of course, our former allocation of 60 cents per capita was never funded, and we had been stuck at a 56-cents-per-capita level for seven years, but we are happy as long as funding seems headed in an upward direction. We have been searching for many years for an effective way to make our voices heard. It is a battle we will have to eternally fight.

On one hand, it is positive that libraries are so much taken for granted as a part of our communities that the public doesn't think about where the money is derived. It's like electricity — when we flip the switch we expect the light to come on. However, as we all know, it is not cheap to run libraries on budgets that grow slowly while user expectations continue to increase. As an example, my library was proud to have installed wireless Internet access only to be astounded when a user came in demanding we provide him a wireless card for his notebook!

Our Friends and Trustees are our strongest advocates as we saw on Library Day at the Capitol, where a sold-out crowd of library supporters met with our legislators to promote libraries. Their pride in our libraries was immediately apparent. However, we must continue this advocacy back home. Some ideas: hold a lunch for your legislative delegation and elected officials at the library; have an open house at your library honoring your legislators and officials; send pictures with your legislators from Library Day to local papers; and, probably the easiest and most painless, periodically e-mail your representatives to thank them and express any concerns.

We must continue to remain vigilant concerning pending

legislation and its effects upon us especially in light of CIPA and bills relating to pornography and the Internet. We were taken by surprise when HB 226, the replacement bill for the previous Georgia obscenity code that was struck down by the court, specifically added "lending" to the bill's wording. While the bill exempts "a person associated with an institution of higher learning," it does not exempt public libraries.

Attempts to have an exemption added as an amendment that would read "a person while working in an official capacity in a public library" failed in the House. The effect could mean any library staff could be targeted if a person checked out a book she/he did not deem appropriate, including even ILL books borrowed from other libraries.

More startling were the vehement comments made by some House members who did not want the exemption for public libraries added. Comments included that librarians never want anyone telling them what to do; there is no way for taxpayers to keep librarians from using tax money to buy dirty books; taxpayers have no control over the librarians; and board members aren't elected so taxpayers have no control over board members. At this writing, the fight has moved over to the Senate side, but it demonstrates the need to keep in touch with our legislators to offset these misperceptions.

On a happier note, plans for GaCOMO 2007 (Jekyll Island, October 17-19) continue. The program proposal form is now available at [www.georgiacomo.org](http://www.georgiacomo.org), and proposals may be submitted through May 31. At the GLA Midwinter Conference, there were many great program ideas, so please follow through with submitting these. We want to share innovative programs going on throughout Georgia and the United States at COMO, and we can't do this without your participation! ▶▶

— **JoEllen Ostendorf**

*President*

*Georgia Library Association*