

Assembly Committee Hearing on Libraries November 29th, 2011

I am Richard Naylor, Director of the Town of Colonie's Public Library. We run an extremely lean municipal Library and have had to trim both full time employees and part time hours for the past two years and in 2012 we face further cuts as the Town has faced increases in health care and pension costs.

I am here to speak especially on behalf of our Public Library Systems and to a lesser extent for State Construction grants. The Upper Hudson Library System or UHLS is a vital part of our library infrastructure as it provides our library catalog and circulation system, as well as helping the local libraries work together more efficiently by providing a forum for shared dialog. This regional program greatly expands patron access to a broad selection of books both through the automation system and by moving materials between our 29 local libraries through the courier service.

On December 14, 1799 George Washington lay dying in his bed. His doctors had already bled him a number of times and he was weak. A young French doctor from Paris suggested that another bleed would sap more of his meager strength and that since he could not breathe well they should open a tube in his windpipe so that the swelling in his throat would not impeded breathing. The young doctor was overruled. Washington, barely able to breathe, was bled again and died shortly after.

Upper Hudson does not lay dying but it has been cut a number of times as part of State efforts to balance its budget. Being aware of the Upper Hudson budget and of the trimming they have done I can say that they have managed their resources carefully and while they have passed along some cuts to the local libraries by raising fees for automation services to a little over 50% of their costs, they have also been whittling away at money set aside for automation upgrades and to cover late state budgets.

We see the Library System as one of the real successes of State regionalization efforts and I urge you to withhold the knife for the coming year as Public Library Systems are a vital part of the Library infrastructure and much more cutting would require them, if they are to survive, to pass along their costs to our Colonie library.

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