

Indiana Library Federation Statement on Senate Bill 1: Property Tax Reform

The Indiana Library Federation (ILF) opposes the current version of SB 1. It presents a serious threat to the continued operation of public libraries in Indiana by undermining their primary source of funding—property taxes.

The Legislative Services Agency’s fiscal impact statement shows that SB 1 would reduce public library funding by over \$40 million in 2026, growing to nearly \$60 million by 2028. Libraries depend on the steady revenue from property taxes to provide vital community services. Any disruption to this funding would have devastating consequences for their survival.

According to the Indiana State Library’s 2023 Public Library Annual Report, libraries saw 21,491,630 visits. It’s clear that Hoosiers value their public libraries with this much usage. Indiana citizens checked out 54,405,568 items from public libraries in 2023. The collective return on investment that this provides to taxpayers is astounding. Imagine if Hoosiers had to purchase out of pocket the over 54 million items that they checked out.

Since the 1800s, Indiana public libraries have played an integral role in enhancing residents’ quality of life. Libraries are not just places to check out books. They are community hubs that meet resident’s needs and provide invaluable services. The services they offer are essential to many aspects of community well-being, including:

- Promote early literacy programs that prepare children for academic success.
- Offer STEM education and makerspace labs that encourage innovation.
- Assist accessing E-government such as unemployment benefits and social services.
- Provide resources to support continuing education, homeschooling, and workforce development.
- Present senior adult programs that combat loneliness and promote social engagement.
- Host community events: music performances, art exhibits, and author talks.
- Bridge the digital divide by offering free WiFi - 20,614,235 sessions in 2023.
- Supply flexible, accessible spaces for studying and entrepreneurship.

Property taxes are essential to Indiana’s libraries. Without stability in funding, these indispensable institutions could face irreversible harm, weakening their ability to serve the public.

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