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Whelan, Debra Lau. "President Obama Proposes Eliminating Federal School Library Funds". School Library Journal 2/1/10: online.

Sending a shockwave through the library community last Monday was President Obama’s 2011 budget proposal to Congress. In it, he removed entirely the *Improving Literacy Through School Libraries* grant program which had been supported and funded by his predecessor, George W. Bush. Surprisingly, Obama’s proposal does include a $400 billion investment in public education, although none of that is appropriated to school libraries, in particular those in higher poverty areas (with 20% or more low income families).

“Put simply, cutting this program will hurt the children of the school districts that are scraping by with the least resources,” according to Lisa Layera Brunkan (cofounder of Fund Our Future Washington). Even though testing showed that schools which qualified for the grant scored higher on state reading tests than those that did not participate, eliminating this funding doesn’t make sense.

Congress will not put its final stamp of approval on this projected budget until September 30, 2010, leaving time for people to write their congress person and lobby through groups such as the AASL. As present and future media specialists, it is in our best interests, as well as those of the schools and children we serve, to do what we can to show our support for library funding. Adequate monies are the lifeline of a successful media center, without which we will eventually dry up and die.

I shudder to think of a media fund elimination. Already, I feel like it is one of my ‘side jobs’ as a librarian (be it right or wrong and certainly it is not ideal) is to be a fund raiser. I am allotted a certain budget from the board (which never seems to be enough from my perspective) and I supplement that with two book fairs a year, a business fund raiser every other year, and an ongoing Birthday Book Club. One year, I had a t-shirt sale (designed by our art teacher), and raised enough money to purchase all of our professional and kids magazines (since then the PTA has stolen my thunder). If I could think of something else, I would probably do it. My motivation and reward is seeing how our children LOVE books, get excited about reading, LOVE coming to the library, that I want to do whatever I can possibly do to create a warm and inviting environment.

Obama’s oversight of school library money is quite disappointing, to say the least. Hopefully, our voices of protest can be heard, and a budget revision in favor of media funding can be allocated.