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# OPINION

## ■ Your Turn

### Become a N.J. Library Champion

Recently, Gov. Chris Christie announced a budget "freeze" which affects \$721,000 in state funding to libraries. Added to the reductions we had already received this year, funding for library programs would be reduced by \$2,677,000 in just one year. It will reduce the total support for library funding to under \$13 million — the lowest level of state support for libraries in decades.

While this will force libraries to make cuts in many areas, the three places where these cuts will have the largest effects currently are:

- The New Jersey Library Network. The New Jersey Library Network joins the resources of local libraries together into a coordinated program of cooperative services, which can be shared by all residents of New Jersey. All of your local libraries are members of the New Jersey Library Network. In difficult economic times, cooperation must be fostered, not eliminated

- The New Jersey Knowledge Initiative. The New Jersey Knowledge Initiative is an award-winning program aimed to foster economic development and innovation by providing information resources needed by entrepreneurs and small business owners in order to permit them to compete in the global economy. Businesses, entrepreneurs and students need solid information resources to succeed. Just when we should be supplying resources for business growth, we are reducing them.

- The Virtual Library. The Vir-

tual Library supports programs such as shared electronic databases for the general public and supports our Jersey Connect system, which provides Internet access to a large portion of our public libraries. This program also supports the ability of the public to use the library from home or work when the library is closed. Unfortunately, reductions in this program pose a serious threat to the electronic connections that support our libraries.

A recent publication by the American Library Association notes that nationwide a perfect storm is brewing — the demand for library services is increasing dramatically at the same time as our funding continues to be eroded. This is exactly what we see in New Jersey. The public is coming in record numbers. They realize they need strong libraries and they need them now. If New Jersey is to recover economically, socially and culturally, we must support our libraries now more than ever.

Despite the bad news, you can help! Please take a moment to go to [www.njlibrarychampions.org](http://www.njlibrarychampions.org) and make your support known by becoming a Library Champion. You can also visit your library and fill out the information manually. The Long Branch Free Public Library has small bookmark-sized forms available for you to fill out to become a N.J. Library Champion. Please, show your support now, when it is needed most.

*Ingrid Bruck is the director of the Long Branch Free Public Library.*

### Guest Column

Ingrid Bruck

## ■ Letters Policy

Letters to the editor may be emailed to [aville@gmnews.com](mailto:aville@gmnews.com). Please include a daytime telephone number where the author may be reached for verification. For more information, call 732-870-6070, ext. 204.

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