



POWER Communication

Policy Outreach with Effective Results

POLICY AND ISSUE DISCUSSION SHEET

Public Library Services

Defining the Issue

Ohio has over 250 public library systems. Many are organized into districts governed by county government. Several larger municipalities, townships and schools have established their own systems. The Ohio Revised Code gives independent libraries the ability to organize into regional districts, too. These systems operate over 700 community branches and outlets statewide.

Technology coupled with new challenges addressing COVID-19 mean many libraries can no longer afford to operate like quiet, book-filled buildings. Public access to digital media, e-books, wifi, videoconferencing and the Internet are needed to help students, teachers, employers and employees with remote applications. Local outlets could network with institutions across state, national and international borders to share catalogs, collections and information, too.

Some communities are seeing local library budgets reduced, causing cuts in programs, operating hours and branch closures. Others are advocating investment of available capital in the digital landscape. As a community service, libraries in urban, suburban and rural areas need to adapt and evolve.

OFBF Policy

Libraries - We support high quality public library services that promote continued learning by all citizens.

Rural Broadband – We support increased access to high-speed Internet connections in rural areas, including wireless, that is reliable and price competitive.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe your local library system? What traditional services does it provide that you would like to see preserved? What programs would

you like to see underway to provide a presence in the digital landscape?

2. How would you describe local broadband capabilities? Are broadband capabilities available through the local library enhanced, or the same as you receive? Can broadband use on the public library system be an example for supporting better broadband capabilities community-wide?
3. The Ohio Revised Code gives county commissioners, courts of common pleas, townships, municipalities and local school systems the ability to appoint governing boards for library systems under their jurisdiction. What experiences and qualifications does a governing board member need to represent rural neighborhoods in your community?
4. What challenges do you see impacting your community long term? What policies should be in place to ensure that the library system continue to be a resource for public information, networking and technology sharing in the future?