THE CONSTANT CAMPAIGN

Budgets did better on the ballot; buildings, less so. Year-round advocacy and foregrounding librarians are keys to success

By John Chrastka & Rachel Korman

In 2015, nearly 150 libraries in 24 states held referenda to renew or enact taxes for operations, staffing, or facilities. More than 1.1 million voters showed up at the polls in 2015 to decide on tax measures for their libraries. Just over 650,000 people voted yes and nearly 470,000 voted no. Of the 148 library ballot measures we have identified (through news reports, surveys, and direct involvement of EveryLibrary, the national library PAC the authors work for), 127 were won and 21 lost. One, while technically passing, actually rolled back the library's funding, making it, in our opinion, a loss.

Though the outcomes of these elections were only directly germane to the health of these particular institutions, the results will be read for trends for the entire field. While this article is an examination of elections held nationwide, it does not represent a national plebiscite on libraries. What we can glean from a deep analysis of these particular elections is the extremely local tone and tenor of the electorate in many separate jurisdictions, some as small as one zip code.

Some 86% of this year's measures passed. At a glance, 2015 was more positive for libraries than 2014, when 78% of the measures were approved. Of the 123 operating budget votes, fully 94% passed. Among the seven that failed, there isn't a pattern by type of measure (i.e., renewal, extension, or new). However, when we look at the types of elections (i.e., operating budget, building, and governance), the picture is a bit different. For capital bonds, 12 out of 21 elections failed, denying hundreds of millions of dollars for improving 21st-century library facilities. For bond measures, this year's 37% pass rate is the worst we've seen since the depths of the Great Recession five years ago. For referenda about library governance (e.g., establishing an independent taxing district), two out of four elections failed, keeping those budgets tied to general fund revenue rather than to a dedicated tax. So while a solid supermajority of voters supports the everyday work of libraries, when it comes to funding growth and change, the situation is much more mixed.

TABLE 1	2015 SUMMARY			
	BUILDING		OPERATING	
	NUMBER OF MEASURES	PASS RATE	NUMBER OF MEASURES	PASS RATE
TOTAL REFERENDA	21	43%	123	94%
DATE				
January-April	5	40%	12	100%
May-August	5	20%	62	97%
September-December	11	55%	49	90%
AMOUNT*				
Under $10 MILLION	12	58%	49	94%
Over $10 MILLION	6	17%	3	100%
Under 10,000	7	43%	54	98%
POPULATION SERVED				
10,000 to 24,999	9	56%	25	96%
25,000 to 49,999	2	0%	21	91%
50,000 to 99,999	0	N/A	10	90%
100,000 or more	3	33%	13	85%
REGION				
Northeast	10	50%	56	100%
Midwest	5	40%	40	85%
South	2	100%	12	100%
West	4	0%	15	93%

SOURCE: *LJ* PUBLIC LIBRARY REFERENDA 2015
*Number of measures do not add up to the total because *LJ* did not receive data.

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TABLE 2 OPERATING REFERENDA 2015

LOCATION	NAME OF LIBRARY	RESULT	% YES	% NO	LOCATION	NAME OF LIBRARY	RESULT	% YES	% NO
CALIFORNIA					**NEW HAMPSHIRE**				
San Francisco	South San Francisco Public Library	Pass	60%	40%	Gilmanton	Gilmanton Year Round Library Iron Works	Pass	55%	45%
South Pasadena	South Pasadena Public Library	Pass	82%	18%					
Weed	Weed Library	Pass	71%	29%	**NEW YORK**				
					Albany	Albany Public Library	Pass	71%	29%
COLORADO					Antwerp	Crosby Public Library	Pass	87%	13%
Englewood	Arapahoe Library District	Pass	56%	44%	Beaver Falls	Beaver Falls Library	Pass	59%	41%
Lakewood	Jefferson County Library	Pass	62%	38%	Belleville	Philomathean Free Library	Pass	76%	24%
Montrose	Montrose Regional Library District	Fail	48%	52%	Black River	Sally Ploof Memorial Library	Pass	79%	21%
					Canton	Canton Free Library	Pass	74%	26%
IDAHO					Cape Vincent	Cape Vincent Community Library	Pass	64%	36%
Burley	Burley Public Library	Pass	55%	45%	Carthage	Carthage Free Library	Pass	79%	21%
Priest Lake	Priest Lake Library District	Pass	70%	30%	Central Square	Central Square Library	Pass	61%	39%
Victor	Valley of the Tetons Library	Pass	70%	30%	Chaumont	Lyme Free Library	Pass	80%	20%
					Claverack	Claverack Free Library	Pass	69%	31%
ILLINOIS					Clayton	Hawn Memorial Library	Pass	64%	36%
McHenry	River East Public Library District	Pass	56%	44%	Cold Spring	Julia L. Butterfield Library	Pass	56%	44%
					Colton	Hepburn Library of Colton	Pass	78%	22%
IOWA					Croghan	Croghan Free Library	Pass	59%	41%
Cedar Rapids	Cedar Rapids Public Library	Fail	45%	55%	Depauville	Depauville Free Library	Pass	64%	36%
Marshalltown	Marshalltown Public Library	Pass	53%	47%	DeWitt	DeWitt Community Library	Pass	70%	30%
					Dexter	Dexter Free Library	Pass	82%	18%
LOUISIANA					East Syracuse	East Syracuse Free Library	Pass	79%	21%
Baton Rouge	East Baton Rouge Parish Library	Pass	58%	42%	Ellisburg	Ellisburg Free Library	Pass	76%	24%
Franklinton	Washington Parish Library	Pass	72%	28%	Fayetteville	Fayetteville Free Library	Pass	66%	34%
Marksville	Avoyelles Parish Library	Pass	75%	25%	Germantown	Germantown Public Library	Pass	59%	41%
New Orleans	New Orleans Public Library	Pass	75%	25%	Gloversville	Gloversville Public Library	Pass	76%	24%
Thibodaux	Lafourche Parish Library	Pass	50%	50%	Guilderland	Guilderland Public Library	Pass	66%	34%
Thibodaux	Lafourche Parish Library	Pass	51%	49%	Harrisville	Harrisville Free Library	Pass	63%	37%
					Henderson	Henderson Free Library	Pass	76%	24%
MICHIGAN					Hopewell Jct.	East Fishkill Community Library	Pass	89%	11%
Adrian	Adrian District Library	Pass	54%	46%	Kinderhook	Valatie Free Library	Pass	64%	36%
Buchanan	Buchanan District Library	Pass	58%	42%	Lockport	Lockport Public Librarypass		85%	15%
Crystal Falls	Crystal Falls District Community Library	Pass	66%	34%	Manlius	Manlius Library	Pass	68%	32%
Decatur	Van Buren Library District	Fail	46%	54%	Marcellus	Marcellus Free Library	Pass	70%	30%
Flint	Flint Public Library	Pass	73%	27%	Marlborough	Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library	Pass	63%	37%
L'Anse	Baraga County Public Library	Fail	40%	60%	Mattydale	Salina Free Library	Pass	71%	29%
Morenci	Stair District Library	Pass	74%	26%	Minoa	Minoa Free Library	Pass	81%	20%
Muskegon	Muskegon District Area Library	Fail	47%	53%	New Paltz	Elting Memorial Library	Pass	66%	34%
Sault Ste. Marie	Superior District Library	Pass	59%	41%	New Rochelle	New Rochelle Public Library	Pass	67%	33%
Schoolcraft	Schoolcraft Community Library	Pass	58%	42%	North Merrick	North Merrick Public Library	Pass	70%	30%
Troy	Troy Public Library	Pass	71%	29%	Oswego	Oswego School District Public Library	Pass	61%	39%
					Penn Yan	Penn Yan Public Library	Pass	85%	15%
MISSOURI					Potsdam	Potsdam Public Library	Pass	76%	24%
Bolivar	Polk County Library	Pass	58%	42%	Poughkeepsie	Poughkeepsie Public Library	Pass	67%	33%
Carthage	Carthage Public Library	Pass	61%	39%					
Marble Hill	Bollinger County Library	Pass	62%	38%					
MONTANA									
Belgrade	Belgrade Community Library	Pass	66%	34%					
Darby	Darby Community Public Library	Pass	74%	26%					

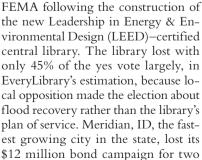SOURCE: *LJ* PUBLIC LIBRARY REFERENDA 2015

The new century on old budgets

Several libraries that had previously held off from going to the ballot for years were successful in 2015. In New Orleans, where a $9.7 million operating referendum passed with a 75% yes vote, it was the first time since 1986 that the library had asked for new tax support. Likewise for Jefferson County, CO, whose winning measure was also its first attempt since 1986. For the River East Library District, IL, voters approved a $59,000 increase to the library's operating revenue, its first bump since the mid-1990s. As well, in Darby, MT, the $30,000 mill levy that passed with a 74% yes vote was 16 years overdue. But the record holder this year seems to be Missouri's Polk County Library, which passed its .05-mill levy increase on the first try since 1949.

PERCENTAGE OF MEASURES PASSED

2015	**86%**
2014	**78%**

Libraries saw significant local and statewide opposition this year as well. In Cedar Rapids, IA, the library was on the ballot for $1.6 million in operating revenue to replace the stop-gap, postdisaster funding from the city council and FEMA following the construction of the new Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED)−certified central library. The library lost with only 45% of the yes vote largely, in EveryLibrary's estimation, because local opposition made the election about flood recovery rather than the library's plan of service. Meridian, ID, the fastest growing city in the state, lost its $12 million bond campaign for two new libraries in the face of strong, direct opposition by a Tea Party−affiliated organization that sent negative mail to every registered Republican voter in the five days before the elec-

TABLE 2 OPERATING REFERENDA 2015 (CONTINUED)

LOCATION	NAME OF LIBRARY	RESULT	% YES	% NO
NEW YORK (CONTINUED)				
Poughquag	Beekman Library	Pass	55%	45%
Pulaski	Pulaski Public Library	Pass	87%	13%
Rhinebeck	Starr Library	Pass	70%	30%
Saratoga Springs	Saratoga Springs Public Library	Pass	91%	9%
Schuylerville	Schuylerville Public Library	Pass	74%	26%
Solvay	Solvay Public Library	Pass	71%	29%
Stanfordville	Stanford Free Library	Pass	67%	33%
Syracuse	Onondaga Free Library	Pass	73%	27%
Tully	Tully Free Library	Pass	72%	29%
Washington	Millbrook Free Library	Pass	71%	29%
West Shokan	Olive Free Library	Pass	71%	29%
Whitney Point	Mary L. Wilcox Memorial Library & Lisle Free Library	Pass	51%	49%
Wingdale	Dover Plains Library	Pass	66%	34%
OHIO				
Akron	Akron-Summit County Public Library	Pass	70%	30%
Alliance	Rodman Public Library	Pass	84%	16%
Barberton	Barberton Public Library	Pass	62%	38%
Chillicothe	Chillicothe and Ross County Public Library	Pass	55%	45%
Eaton	Preble County District Library	Pass	70%	30%
Findlay	Findlay-Hancock County Public Library	Pass	84%	16%
Garrettsville	Portage County District Library	Fail	47%	53%
Gratis	Marion Lawrence Memorial Library	Pass	55%	45%
Hamilton	The Lane Libraries	Pass	78%	22%
Holgate	Holgate Community Library	Pass	76%	24%
Lewisburg	Brown Memorial Public Library	Pass	80%	20%
Liberty Center	Liberty Center Public Library	Pass	78%	22%

LOCATION	NAME OF LIBRARY	RESULT	% YES	% NO
Louisville	Louisville Public Library	Pass	74%	26%
Louisville	Louisville Public Library	Fail	47%	53%
Marietta	Washington County Public Library	Pass	68%	32%
Massillon	Massillon Public Library	Pass	56%	44%
Middletown	MidPointe Library System	Pass	81%	19%
New Lexington	Perry County District Library	Pass	52%	48%
Piqua	Piqua Public Library	Pass	64%	36%
Plain City	Plain City Public Library	Pass	58%	42%
Ravenna	Reed Memorial Library	Pass	66%	34%
Shelby	Marvin Memorial Library	Pass	63%	37%
Willoughby	Kirtland Public Library	Pass	66%	34%
OKLAHOMA				
Norman	Norman Public Library	Pass	72%	28%
OREGON				
Eugene	Eugene Public Library	Pass	53%	47%
Hillsboro	Washington County Cooperative Library Services	Pass	64%	36%
Sweet Home	Sweet Home Library	Pass	58%	42%
VERMONT				
Barre	Aldrich Public Library	Pass	61%	39%
WASHINGTON				
Castle Rock	Castle Rock Public Library	Pass	61%	39%
WEST VIRGINIA				
Keyser	Keyser-Mineral County Public Library	Pass	88%	12%
Middlebourne	Tyler County Public Library	Pass	75%	25%
Oak Hill	Fayette County Public Library	Pass	89%	11%
Piedmont	Piedmont Public Library	Pass	88%	12%
Weston	Louis Bennett Public Library	Pass	74%	26%

SOURCE: *LJ* PUBLIC LIBRARY REFERENDA 2015

tion. The Louisburg, KS, library faced defeat for a second time with a scaled-down plan to move the library to the "new" section of town from the old downtown. What is most interesting here, and what suggests hope for a successful retry in the future, is that through postelection surveys the library leadership learned that it wasn't an opposition to taxes that spiked disapproval. Instead, a legitimate and deep concern for how the library acts to anchor the old downtown made people hesitant to vote yes for a new library in a different location.

The worst result this year was for the Bollinger County Library in Missouri, where the library's operating revenue was "rolled back" to half the amount in a vote on April 7. The rollback referendum was placed on the ballot through a petition drive by citizens concerned about how the library was spending tax dollars. The library is now operating at a taxing level first set in 1948.

Libraries dodged a bullet in Kentucky when the appeals court there overturned a lower court ruling that would have rolled back funding to 1979 levels for 99 out of 104 libraries statewide. The only way to have restored funding to current levels would have been through a successful petition drive or an election in each jurisdiction. Running 99 simultaneous ballots or door-to-door petitions would have strained the limited advocacy and coordination resources of not only the state level stakeholders but also

partners from across the country. We need to remain vigilant about efforts both by individuals, as in Bollinger County and Meridian, or groups, as in Kentucky, to cut library funding as part of their larger antitax agendas.

Facing the fear

EveryLibrary believes that there could have been a lot more libraries on the ballot in 2015. In the recent Great Recession, libraries gave back hundreds of millions of dollars in funding through budget cuts, losses at the ballot box, or purposefully forgoing ballot measures. But now that the economy is in between recessions, why aren't more libraries going to the ballot to restore or extend their funding?

Library ballot initiatives lose for five key reasons: lack of marketing; "any tax is a bad tax" opposition; local political games; local groups that have an "if the library wins, we lose" approach"; and personal opposition to the library board or staff.

Yet in our experience, there is another critical and little discussed reason that holds libraries back from even starting down the ballot path: quite simply, fear. Fear of shifting in the eyes of the community from being their beloved librarian or trusted neighbor on the board to being the one who raises taxes. Fear of putting themselves out for a plan that they may not be 100% behind. Fear of

TABLE 3 TEN-YEAR TRENDS

YEAR	BUILDING			OPERATING		
	#	PERCENTAGE		#	PERCENTAGE	
		PASS	FAIL		PASS	FAIL
2015	21	43%	57%	123	94%	6%
2014	33	73%	27%	147	81%	19%
2013	30	63%	37%	146	88%	12%
2011	18	44%	56%	96	88%	12%
2010	29	55%	45%	220	87%	13%
2009	28	54%	46%	123	84%	16%
2008	27	67%	33%	42	74%	26%
2007	46	74%	26%	29	69%	31%
2006	36	64%	36%	69	74%	26%
2005	48	52%	48%	57	60%	40%
AVERAGE	**32**	**59%**	**41%**	**105**	**80%**	**20%**

SOURCE: *LJ* PUBLIC LIBRARY REFERENDA 2015

losing not just the measure but their reputation or standing in the community.

These anxieties are something that we talk about with every campaign on which we work. While library leadership may be ready to start down the path to the ballot, there is a need to address the real, true, and personal root of that trepidation for your entire staff and stakeholder team. It is an important and brave first step to referenda reality. Most fears about self-image and identity are overcome when confronted and shared and when peers are aligned to support one another.

Another key to overcoming that apprehension is to root your ballot measure or funding request in demonstrated community need. While that may seem to be a given, it can be valuable to unpack that step. We know from OCLC's "From Awareness to Funding" (2008) report and other voter attitude polling that about 35%–40% of voters will vote yes for the library as a matter of belief. They will approve a referendum on a "cold reading" of the measure language (provided that the ballot wording is clear). We also know that another 35%–40% of voters are not automatic yes voters, not because they don't believe in the library, but because they need some assurance that their tax money is going to something useful for their community. Those cautious voters want to have a dialog, to ask some questions about where their money is headed and who is spending it. These voters need the staff and the board to have done their work through strategic planning, facilities planning, or management planning. Open and transparent plans expose what would change in the community if the referendum passes or fails. This same level of outward, community-facing responsibility also provides the support and pledge to internal customers on staff, on the board, with Friends and foundations, and with other key stakeholders. If they have confidence in the open, transparent, and legitimate process that developed the plan, they have nothing to fear.

This doesn't mitigate the need to anticipate and work to overcome opposition to the referendum. Concerns about local friction, or even opposition, are real. Opposition can come from the remaining 20%–30% of the electorate who are not believers in the library or who are simply critical of local taxing practices. But if you have done the work and engaged the electorate not only on Election Day but throughout the development of your funding or building plan, you will be able to have the conversation with the opposition and save energy for the hard work of walking around all of your precincts.

Looking ahead to 2016

As this issue of *LJ* goes to press, the Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary are still ahead. It remains to be seen how the "top of the ticket" candidates influence turnout in

TABLE 4	LIBRARY GOVERNANCE REFERENDA 2015			
LOCATION	LIBRARY	RESULT	% YES	% NO
ILLINOIS Altamont	Altamont Public Library	Fail	45	55
MISSOURI Maryville	Maryville-Nodaway County Library	Pass	67	33
NEW YORK Cohoes	Cohoes Public Library	Fail	31	69
WASHINGTON Concrete	Upper Skagit Partial-County Rural Library District	Pass	68	32

SOURCE: *LJ* PUBLIC LIBRARY REFERENDA 2015; Library Governance includes referenda to create independent library districts, join or expand existing library districts, or become a part of a school district.

Of the 148 library ballot measures identified...

☑ **127** won

☒ **21** lost

2016 elections and how the demographics of those voters will affect local tax measures at the bottom of the ballot. Research in the political sciences is mixed about the impact that the presidential race can have on local tax and bond referenda. In 2008 and 2012, turnout among new voters was strong for President Obama. We saw 2008 as a good year for library elections, but we would argue that the impact of the Great Recession was yet to be felt at the ballot box for local tax measures. The Great Recession did make the 2012 election cycle one of the worst for libraries in recent times, despite a good turnout of progressive voters, which many assume are "better" voters for library issues. In fact, there is nothing in the data about voter party that indicates any difference between conservatives and progressives, or among Republican, Democrat, or Independent. The only thing that is an indicator of possible behavior is if the voter is affiliated with an antitax group or party.

EveryLibrary is already lined up to work with 15 library communities on their ballot measures and building referenda for 2016. Historically, we have worked on about 10% of the library campaigns on the ballot each year. Next year we anticipate somewhere around 200 libraries to appear. We know from research in the political sciences that frequent voters—those who come out not just in presidential years but vote in every or nearly every election in off-cycle years—tend to fill out the whole ballot. What remains to be seen for 2016 elections is whether voters who are motivated to turn out by the antitax sentiment of their preferred party hopefuls will follow their philosophy of government all the way through to the bottom of the ballot, where the library measure appears.

For supporters of a library referendum on a 2016 ballot, it will be more important than ever to peruse the voter data for each local jurisdiction to identify frequent voters. Unlike library staff and boards, who must remain neutral about the outcome of the measure, the Yes Committee is a special interest organization lobbying actively for a win. That committee needs to focus its attention on volunteer or paid get-out-the-vote work to reach those frequent voters. It takes effort to ensure that frequent voters are educated and activated to approve the library measure.

In 2016, there will be a lot of noise to contend with, from a rise in statewide propositions to other local jurisdictions being on the ballot as well. Likewise, ballot access issues are starting to change how and when voters turn out. If your library leadership is considering a bond measure or an operating referendum, there are a few important developments to consider. The timing of your election must be driven not by any conventional wisdom about elections but by the financial needs of your institution, and the old adage about all politics

TABLE 5 | BUILDING REFERENDA 2015

LOCATION	NAME OF LIBRARY	RESULT	% YES	% NO
ARIZONA				
Pima	Pima County Library	Fail	38	62
CONNECTICUT				
Oxford	Oxford Public Library	Pass	59	41
IDAHO				
Meridian	Meridian District Library	Fail	59	41
IOWA				
Garner	Garner Public Library	Pass	87	13
Knoxville	Knoxville Public Library	Pass	62	38
New Hampton	New Hampton Public Library	Fail	30	70
KANSAS				
Louisburg	Louisburg Library	Fail	45	55
MAINE				
Ellsworth	Ellsworth Public Library	Fail	40	60
MICHIGAN				
Hartland	Cromaine District Library	Fail	46	54
MINNESOTA				
Columbia Heights	Columbia Heights Public Library	Pass	63	37
NEW HAMPSHIRE				
Lee	Lee Public Library	Fail	35	65
Milford	Wadleigh Memorial Library	Fail	45	55
NEW YORK				
Commack	Commack Public Library	Pass	74	26
Galway	Galway Public Library	Fail	47	53
Goshen	Goshen Public Library	Pass	61	39
Hauppauge	Hauppauge Public Library	Fail	42	58
Washingtonville	Moffat Library	Pass	72	28
TEXAS				
Richmond	Fort Bend County Libraries	Pass	70	30
UTAH				
Spanish Fork	Spanish Fork Library	Fail	29	71
VERMONT				
Poultney	Poultney Public Library	Pass	71	29
VIRGINIA				
Charles City	Charles City County Libraries	Pass	60	40
WASHINGTON				
Spokane Valley	Spokane County Library District	Fail	58	42

SOURCE: *LJ* PUBLIC LIBRARY REFERENDA 2015

communications drive as well as a more robust Get Out the Vote effort that is multiphasal.

Door-to-door all year

One way to build up your volunteer base and accustom library staff, boards, and Friends to continuous campaigning is to integrate the techniques from candidate efforts into your normal community engagement and survey work. Surveys show that voter behavior in library elections is driven by voter perceptions not only of the library as an institution but also of the librarians acting for the community good. We know from our election work with urban, suburban, exurban, and rural libraries in states from coast to coast that this holds true. In response, we talk a lot about "the Librarian as Candidate." Our industry tends to have a fuller advocacy vocabulary concerning our institutions (e.g., Libraries Change Lives, Libraries Build Communities, Geek the Library) than about who does the work of the profession (aside from awards and recognition programs).

For library communities contemplating going to the polls in the next several years, we challenge you to start introducing your staff to your community in a way that isn't tied to direct services but is instead focused on brand building for librarians. Your constituents are hungry to have their perception of their librarians updated, their nostalgia for a librarian of their youth revisited. People hope that the librarian is as relevant in the 21st century as s/he was for them when they were kids. Door-to-door is a classic strategy for candidates because it works to humanize the candidate and introduce them to their public in a very personal, high-touch way. If our thesis that "the Librarian Is the Candidate" is right, door-to-door community surveys and similar library card sign-up activity is the easiest and most effective way to get your staff seen in the area.

Locally grown

President Kennedy once said, "Victory has a hundred fathers and defeat is an orphan." EveryLibrary helped support library communities on both sides of the win/loss ledger this year. As an industry, we have to thank the thousands of people who worked tirelessly for their library measures across these 148 elections, win or lose. No matter the outcome, communities became more aware of their library's impact on their quality of life.

Three factors divide the winners from the losers: opposition, coalition building, and residents' efforts. If all politics is local, strategies will, in turn, have to be locally tailored in each of these areas. None of these can be underestimated or, worse, ignored. While there is no magic bullet that can help all campaigns, there is no harm in surfacing your library's impact on your community's quality of life early and often. Engage with your community outside the library and start planning for your Election Day today. Embrace your candidacy. ∎

being local means you have to understand voter attitudes and behaviors locally.

In the ten states that still offer "straight ticket" voting in general elections for 2016 (AL, IN, IA, KY, MI, OK, PA, SC, TX, and UT), concerted voter education is needed about library referenda and other nonpartisan referenda that must be voted on individually. In the three states that offer 100% "vote by mail" (CO, OR, WA), Election Day is several weeks long. Plan for volunteer fatigue as well as a voter ID and follow-up program that gets daily updates on ballots returned from the local Clerk of Elections to help you track likely supporters all the way through the process. Only 13 states do not permit early voting and require absentee ballots to be requested with an "excuse" (AL, CT, DE, KY, MI, MS, MO, NH, NY, PA, RI, SC, VA). In the other 33 states, any voter may cast a ballot during a designated period prior to Election Day. This shift to early voting and to permanent absentee mail-in ballots is only beginning to be understood by major campaigns. For libraries on the ballot, it means supporting a longer and more engaged information-only

More than **1.1 million** Americans voted on tax measures for their libraries in 2015. Just over **650,000** people voted yes and nearly **470,000** voted no.