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Meeting Slated to Take Public Comments on Proposed Budget Cuts

(HELENA) --- The Montana State Library Commission will host a public meeting beginning at 2 p.m. Tuesday, June 6, to take comments on a draft of the state library's budget reduction plan.

The meeting will be held in the Montana State Library Grizzly Conference Room, and online.

The State Library's current Fiscal Year 2017 budget is about \$6 million. For Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, the State's House Bill 2 budget mandates a reduction of \$309,000 from the State Library budget, according to State Librarian Jennie Stapp. In addition, under Senate Bill 261, if certain "trigger points" are met, the funding is reduced by an additional \$681,000, for a total reduction of about \$990,000 in state funding.

"There's no easy way to say it – this is a significant hit not just to the State Library, but also to libraries throughout Montana," Stapp said.

On Wednesday, the State Library informed 12 of its 44 staff members that they could be part of a reduction in force. The number of people losing their jobs is based upon the triggers being met.

The library also plans to close its reading room, merge the Talking Book Library with the Digital Library, and cut up to 50 percent of the resource sharing budget to local libraries.

These cuts come at a time with the State Library faces additional cuts of more than \$1 million in federal funding the state receives under the Library Services and Technology Act, which President Donald Trump removed from his proposed budget that's pending before Congress. The State Library continues to urge all Montanans to contact Congress about the importance to federal funds for Montana libraries.

No action will be taken at the June 6 meeting. However, all comments received, including those received through the online meeting platform, become part of the official State Library Commission's public record in accordance with [MCA 2-3-212](#).

Members of the public who wish to join the virtual meeting should contact Marlys Stark at 406-444-3384 by 5 p.m. on Monday, June 5, 2017.

The Montana State Library Commissioners include Chair Bruce Newell of Helena; Kenning Arlitsch, appointee of the commissioner of Higher Education; Elsie Arntzen of Helena, Superintendent of Public

Instruction; Connie Eissinger of Brockway; Anne Kish of Twin Bridges; Aaron LaFromboise of Browning; and Ken Wall of Missoula.

The State Library Commission sets forth policies and funding priorities that empower the State Library to meet its mission and statutory obligations and to advocate for the State Library and the Montana library and information communities whenever possible.

Members of the public who wish to join the meeting remotely can login at <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/582127893> You also can dial in using your phone in the United States at: +1 (872) 240-3212. The Access Code is: 582-127-893

About the Montana State Library

Through its statewide programs, the Montana State Library empowers Montanans; enhances learning in families and communities; builds 21st Century skills; and provides opportunities for civic participation. For more information, visit <http://msl.mt.gov>.

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