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TIMBERLAND REGIONAL LIBRARY STAFF UNION SAYS “NO LAYOFFS!”

At a time when libraries are already under attack, AFSCME 3758-B strongly opposes additional cuts to library staffing and calls for an independent investigation into the cause of TRL’s budget crisis

Tumwater, WA — Last week, management at Timberland Regional Library (TRL) made a stunning announcement--a 3.5 million dollar deficit had been discovered in the budget, and in addition TRL was no longer able to meet their required 30% reserve in the 2026 budget’s beginning general fund balance. And to address this shortfall, Executive Director Cheryl Heywood announced a series of cost-cutting measures, including a drastic cut to the budget for new library materials and a sudden massive reduction in frontline staffing through layoffs, which may potentially lead to many library buildings operating without staff in the near future.

But what frustrates library workers is that, only a few months ago, TRL’s administration claimed the budget was in good health. **TRL’s Board of Trustees must have believed those assurances when they approved the 2026 budget on December 30th, since they approved 15% budgeted increases for the two top administrators below the Director, as compared to the 2025 budget.** The library’s own budget and funding FAQs do not provide clear or full context or explanation for decisions like this which were made when preparing the 2026 numbers. And now, TRL is facing an immediate budget shortfall, a predicted additional shortfall, and layoff notices that will be sent out by the end of this month. This reckless plan has the potential to devastate library services for hundreds of thousands of people in our region, and it is a clear indication that TRL’s administration is not in any way equipped to address this budget crisis.

The most generous reading of this situation is that the library administration severely underestimated the scale of the budget and general fund shortfall in the numbers they provided in December. Yet that would still amount to severe financial negligence. Of course, final responsibility for the library’s budget crisis falls on the billionaires and other funders of the ballot initiative that has kept the property tax levy increase capped at 1% since 2001, with the result that Timberland’s budget is kept well behind inflation. Nevertheless, it is the library administration’s responsibility to take these facts into account, budget accordingly, and go to the ballot for levy lid lifts before a crisis. For the sake of the library’s continued existence, TRL administrators must be held accountable when they fail. **That’s why AFSCME Local 3758-B is calling on the Board of Trustees and County Commissioners to launch an independent, thorough investigation into TRL’s finances and budget forecasting process.** We demand a complete, measured plan that doesn’t involve layoffs to any of the lower level frontline staff who keep our libraries open.

The union’s longtime Secretary, Naomi Bell, also has a message for community members: “Thank you so much for your support. Please sign up for [our union’s mailing list](#) to stay updated as we navigate this

difficult time for library workers. We also hope you'll join us at the special [Board of Trustees meeting](#) on February 10th on Zoom at 4:30 PM to demand no layoffs and to call for a thorough independent investigation into this budget crisis."

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