

Hello. My name is Martina L. Kranz. I've lived in Minot, North Dakota for 25 years. I'm a board member of the Minot Public Library's Friends of the Library, a librarian, and a retired member of the U.S. Army. I'm writing my testimony in opposition to the library bills being introduced to the State Legislature. These bills are censorship and a violation of the First Amendment rights of every citizen in North Dakota.

First, as a member of the military, I defended every U.S. citizen's constitutional rights. We possess every right to read and to choose what we want to read. Our country consists of many different citizens, which is why we are called a "melting pot" and makes the U.S. a culturally rich country. To keep our citizens educated and well-informed, libraries contain many types of books to help the community members solve problems, provide entertainment, provide answers for research, navigate through a tough time, and many other reasons. To have certain groups of people protest books because of a character's race, religion, sexual orientation or any other reason that they deem "objectionable" or "pornographic" is ludicrous. Sometimes, people turn to books to identify with other people in their same situation in life. If parents worry about what their children see, hear, or read, then they need to accompany their children to the library at all times and supervise their own children, not try to impose a "moral" law onto everyone else. During my career in the military, I defended the First Amendment, and I'm going to defend it now. Just as we have the Second Amendment in the Constitution, the right to bear arms, we also have the freedom to read, which is a defense against ignorance, racism and all the other "isms," and misinformation.

Second, as a librarian, the idea of criminalizing librarians for helping patrons, whether adults or children, is ludicrous too. There is a reason that most libraries contain a children's library and an adult library. We help patrons according to their age and provide materials

appropriate for their age. Our justice system has much more important duties than prosecute librarians because they allowed patrons to borrow materials that might help them with problems or feelings or inform them about other people and their view of the world. Other people and other ideas about the world exist. The effort to homogenize a community or city by censoring books and making it a criminal act to provide access to them is ideological repression. To make access to “objectionable” books a criminal act is another form of thought and speech control. Arthur Fletcher, former head of the United Negro College Fund, said “A mind is a terrible thing to waste.” It’s also a terrible thing to control. We wouldn’t have a democratic or dynamic country. If we begin censoring books and denying citizens their First Amendment rights for the comfort of certain groups, we are no different than dictatorships or Communist regimes. Please, no thought control here.