

I write in opposition to the proposed legislation, SB 2307.

I have been a constant user and beneficiary of public libraries since 1961, when the public library in my then-small southern California hometown was located in a clothing store. I have recently concluded a 33-year career as an academic librarian and I continue to serve the West Fargo Public Library (WFPL) as a member of its board of directors, most recently as the board's president.

What the WFPL has been doing continues to work, as exemplified by its ever-increasing circulation statistics, door counts, and attendance at its many programs. The citizens of West Fargo know that the physical and electronic resources provided by the WFPL, and paid for by them, match their values and needs, even as statistics show that the city is underserved by the library's space and collections. The proposed legislation would do nothing less than place costly unnecessary and unasked-for barriers to citizens' access to information as well as place an undue burden on the library's budget, restricting its ability to provide necessary services to the community and forcing it to spend sparse money on a superfluous construction project and age-verification software. Further, the WFPL has in place policies (as do other public libraries in North Dakota) that already answer the concerns addressed by SB 2307. It is legislation in search of a problem.

I commend to your attention an editorial in the Bismarck Tribune by Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library Board of Directors president Dianna Kindseth and BVMPL director Christine Kujawa, who write, "This law functionally forces the library to proactively restrict collections and acquiesce to requests to remove contested materials. It poses a challenge to the fundamental principles of public libraries in the United States, which are built on the ideals of free and open access to diverse information, empowering individuals to make their own choices about the materials they wish to engage with." If the supporters of this bill are concerned that their own children will engage with materials that they find objectionable, they are invited to come into the library with their children in order to guide their library use and to use the library's policies as they are intended. Arranging or restricting access to the library's materials, physical and electronic, so that other people will not be able to encounter those materials is deeply un-American.

I wish to note, also, that the proposed legislation is not being brought forward by the citizens of the communities in North Dakota but, rather, is the product of paid outside agitators who have no interest, vested or otherwise, in the continued success of the City of West Fargo and its library or in the other cities and their public libraries in the state. I urge you to vote no on this legislation.

Yours, &c.

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