

Testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 2307

For most of my life, I lived in western North Dakota. I was born in Parshall, ND, and worked as the Center Director at the Burdick Job Corps in Minot until 2005.

Growing up on a farm about 10 miles north of Parshall, I not only appreciated the library, but the book mobile was also an additional benefit. I always checked out the maximum amount of books that I could, as we could afford to have few books in our home. However, I was fortunate that both my parents valued reading and we were taken regularly to the library where my sister and I contend that between us we read every single book in the town library and most of the ones in the school library. Without access to the books at the library, my world would have been small indeed. But, the library and its offerings opened my eyes to the larger world.

After graduating from college, I became an English teacher and I taught in several rural ND schools. I saw firsthand again the power of libraries on the young people who had limited resources. While working at the Burdick Job Corps, we regularly took our students to the Minot Public Library, as our own center library was small. Every time a young person came back from the Minot Public Library, they would be thrilled with the opportunity to check out books and access the other resources available.

Now, I am a grandmother living in Moorhead. My granddaughter lives in Fargo, and I regularly take her to the Fargo Public Library, as well as the other wonderful libraries in the Fargo and Moorhead system. She loves checking out books and I love how she loves to read. I have recently taken my five year – old grandson to the library for the first time, and he was thrilled with the experience.

Because I so strongly have experienced in myself, my students, and now my grandchildren, the benefits of libraries and access to books, I was disappointed to learn that North Dakota legislators are trying to censor materials in our libraries. **Senate Bill 2307** would require librarians to remove unclear “explicit” materials from our library shelves. The bill’s censorship might even extend to digital materials like ebooks, articles, and audiobooks that many North Dakotans access through their local library.

I have studied the information provided by ***Right to Read ND***, and agree with their concerns about Senate Bill 2307 such as the ones listed below:

1. **The bill would censor books and materials in libraries.** The bill’s vague definition of “explicit sexual materials” would open the door to individuals placing their own morals and standards on library materials. A small group of individuals shouldn’t be making decisions for the community about what is appropriate in public libraries.
2. **The bill would especially impact our rural communities.** While some public libraries in North Dakota have different sections—like children’s, teen, and adults—many others are very small libraries. My own library in Parshall was one room and many rural libraries are still that way today as budget cuts and lack of federal grants threaten small libraries. Small libraries don’t have the facilities or budget to separate the sections and would be in danger of violating the law if this bill passed.
3. **The bill would criminalize librarians.** Librarians who display books with any nudity on the cover would receive a Class B misdemeanor. My mother, sister and I all read a lot of Harlequin romances during those years on the farm when I was growing up. But, that means that all those shirtless men

on the cover of romance novels would be a violation of the law if the bill passed. Ask any North Dakota farm wife if she thinks her local librarian should be punished for carrying Harlequin romances on the shelves and the answer would be no, but that's exactly the extremes this bill could allow.

4. **The bill is state government overreach.** The state attorney general would be required to review complaints from individuals about materials in local libraries and could decide to withhold funding as punishment for not complying.

I am a proud BadAss Grandma for Democracy. Libraries are an invaluable resource to our children's education, and to the future of our democracy. Libraries provide access to materials for all people, regardless of income, and they allow all citizens access to information to include reading a newspaper online at a library terminal or in hard copy to learn what the state legislature is doing.. During the 2023 ND legislative session, the Federal Miller Test for obscenity was put into state law. The Miller Test ensures that libraries have age-appropriate materials in children's collections. This law also requires libraries to file a report yearly so the state can make sure they are complying.

Senate Bill 2307 is another attempt by North Dakota legislators to censor materials in public libraries and override North Dakotan's like my granddaughter' and their First Amendment rights. Senate Bill 2307 is also another example of needless regulations which supposedly is all the rage these days.

Senate Bill 2307 places a needless burden on libraries and is unnecessary censorship.

I urge you to vote no on Senate Bill 2307.

Sincerely,

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