



November 28, 2022

Mr. Brian L. Glorioso, Chairman  
St. Tammany Parish Republican Executive Committee  
P.O. Box 2505  
Mandeville, LA 70471

Dear Mr. Glorioso,

The St. Tammany Parish Library and the Library Board of Control thank you for your invitation to speak before the St. Tammany Republican Parish Executive Committee. While I was looking forward to addressing your organization, in recent discussion with the District Attorney's office, it was determined that a formal written response to your organization rather than an appearance would be most appropriate.

Many of you have asked, "Why can't you just remove the books in question?"

The District Attorney's Office advised our staff that we cannot exclude a book or classification of books primarily because we disagree with the ideas presented in the book. Our understanding is that a book cannot legally be removed or restricted because of disagreement with it politically or as an attempt to censor an unpopular viewpoint.

The District Attorney has also stated that a book can be removed or restricted if it is pervasively vulgar or lacks educational value or suitability. The Library Board of Control has a process for the public to provide input and present concerns, regarding specific books and I strongly encourage the public to become involved and active in this process.

Healthy public input is the path to implementing growth and change. For example, complaints regarding the content of specific books began to surface midsummer, yet it was not until last week that a concerned citizen filed the first formal appeal. Because of that one person's action, their concerns are already on the December meeting agenda.

In addition, our team has also been working with the District Attorney to explore our legal options for the disposition of challenged materials. To this end, we are proposing at the next Library Board of Control meeting that all reconsideration committee decisions be placed on the Library Board of Control's public meeting agenda.

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Unfortunately, much of the information spreading online has been misinformation or exaggerations. For example, the claim that children are able to download controversial graphic novels is incorrect. Only the cover of those books in question can be viewed, but the book's content is always restricted to adult online accounts. Other downloadable books of concern were NOT purchased by the library but available via a subscription service called Hoopla, which allows parents to restrict access using the "kid's mode."

However, we believe it's important to address the root cause of these concerns, share the best way for parents to make their voices heard, and update our processes to be even better as a library system. That is exactly what we've done by seeking the legal guidance detailed above and taking immediate action to ensure parents have control over the content available to their child and confidence in library policies.

In direct response to parental concerns, we introduced a new library card system for minors giving parents even greater control over what their children can check out:

- A new children's library card will restrict checkouts to only materials in the library's children's section.
- A new youth library card restricts checkouts to only materials located in the children's and teen section, which includes young adult fiction but restricts checkouts to young adult non-fiction (which is located in the adult section).
- Both of these new library cards will only allow children to access age-appropriate material, as determined by their parents.

These new library cards are available now, and parents interested in utilizing this new system can sign up today. Starting January 3, 2023, every parent will be required to choose which of the juvenile cards their child will utilize so that every child's checkouts are restricted according to their parent's wishes. The library is also working closely with our technology vendors to ensure our online services match these new requirements.

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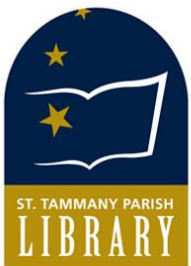
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Please know that we will follow the legal guidance of the District Attorney to ensure our process is legally sound and in the best interest of the community we serve. The entire St. Tammany Parish Library staff, as well as, the members of the Library Board of Control will continue to listen and adapt our library to the changing needs and requests of our entire community.

Sincerely,



Mrs. Kelly La Rocca, Director St. Tammany Parish Library



Mrs. Rebecca Taylor, President, St. Tammany Parish Library Board of Control

Cc: Josh Allison – Vice Chairman  
Pamela Ferguson – Treasurer  
Doug Tate – Recording Secretary  
Joyette Rhoden – Recording Secretary  
Jeff Landry - Attorney General  
Mike Cooper – St. Tammany Parish President  
Warren Montgomery - District Attorney  
St. Tammany Parish Council

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