

State of Tennessee



The Secretary of State
State Capitol
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0305

Tre Hargett
Secretary of State

615-741-2819
Tre.Hargett@tn.gov

October 27, 2025

Ms. Luanne James, Ms. Mindy Barrett, & Mr. Cody York
Linebaugh Public Library
105 West Vine Street
Murfreesboro, TN 37130

Dear Ms. James, Ms. Barrett & Mr. York,

My office and the Tennessee State Library & Archives have long recognized and supported local control and local decision-making in libraries. Library decisions should be shaped by the values of the library's community as well as the fiscal limitations that require tough decisions about how to spend finite dollars over an almost infinite number of books. Libraries are best suited to make the decisions regarding the books they purchase, and they also have policies in place to review materials that may be challenged. I believe that this level of local decision-making helps build a strong library that is well-supported by its community.

Libraries, however, often use state and federal funding that is typically facilitated through the Tennessee State Library & Archives to purchase materials for their collections. It is my responsibility and the responsibility of the State Librarian and Archivist to ensure that any recipient of state or federal funds understands that it must comply with all applicable federal and state laws and grant agreements. I am keenly aware of the need to ensure that our federal and state funding is used in accordance with all laws and not put at risk due to potential misuse by an individual library or librarian. Said more specifically, I cannot allow the actions of one library to potentially harm and impact over 200 other libraries throughout the state.

I want to do all I can to ensure that local decision-making for materials purchased with state and federal funds remains intact, and I need your help to ensure that the decisions around collection purchases are in accordance with all applicable laws and the Regional Library System's Library Service Agreement.

With this background as context, I am asking the following of each library in the Regional Library System:

1. Please undertake an immediate age-appropriateness review (over the next 60 days) of all materials in your juvenile children's section. As part of this review, please identify any materials that may be inconsistent with Tennessee age-appropriateness laws, in violation of any federal law, including President Trump's Executive Order, or otherwise contrary to any other applicable state or federal laws.
 - a. The Board of Directors should be provided a report of the review from the Library Director.
 - b. The Board of Directors should also internally initiate the reconsideration of materials process for any item it believes to be in violation of state or federal law.
2. Please provide a final report of your review to my office and the Tennessee State Librarian and Archivist by January 19, 2026. The report should include a summary of any titles that you determined were not age-appropriate for the juvenile children's section and what actions the board took regarding such titles.

Additionally, legitimate concerns about a particular book in your juvenile children's collection have been brought to my attention. *Fred Gets Dressed*, by Peter Brown, is worthy of review both for age-appropriateness and to determine whether the book and its purchase comply with President Trump's Executive Order titled "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government," which I shared with you in an earlier letter (enclosed).

I recommend that, if you have questions regarding these reviews, your library's county or city attorney guide you through the reviews.

I have asked our State Librarian & Archivist, Jamie Ritter, to reach out to you directly to help answer questions you may have and to clarify any aspect of your juvenile children's collection review. He will be in touch with you to schedule a time to discuss this.

I want to thank you for your continued service. As I have said before, strong libraries are essential to strong communities. Thank you once again for the many ways you are serving your community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Tre Hargett", written in a cursive style.

Tre Hargett
Secretary of State

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October 31, 2025

Ms. Cassandra Taylor and Mr. Cody York
Smyrna Public Library
400 Enon Springs W.
Smyrna, TN 37167

Dear Ms. Taylor and Mr. York,

My office and the Tennessee State Library & Archives have long recognized and supported local control and local decision-making in libraries. Library decisions should be shaped by the values of the library's community as well as the fiscal limitations that require tough decisions about how to spend finite dollars over an almost infinite number of books. Libraries are best suited to make the decisions regarding the books they purchase, and they also have policies in place to review materials that may be challenged. I believe that this level of local decision-making helps build a strong library that is well-supported by its community.

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 - b. The Board of Directors should also internally initiate the reconsideration of the materials process for any item it believes to be in violation of state or federal law.
2. Please provide a final report of your review to my office and the Tennessee State Librarian and Archivist by January 19, 2026. The report should include a summary of any titles that you determined were not age-appropriate for the juvenile children's section and what actions the board took regarding such titles.

I recommend that, if you have questions regarding this review, your library's county or city attorney guide you through the review.

I have asked our State Librarian & Archivist, Jamie Ritter, to reach out to you directly to help answer questions you may have and to clarify any aspect of your juvenile children's collection review. He will be in touch with you to schedule a time to discuss this.

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Sincerely,

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Tre Hargett
Secretary of State

Enclosure: September 8, 2025, letter for reference

State of Tennessee



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State Capitol

Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0305

Tre Hargett
Secretary of State

615-741-2819

Tre.Hargett@tnsos.gov

September 8, 2025

To: Library Director

RE: Grant recipients' compliance with federal and state law

Dear Library Director,

As you know, I, as well as the staff I work with at the Tennessee State Library & Archives, are believers that strong libraries are essential to strong communities. This fundamental belief is one of the reasons we are proud to provide grants for libraries to fund the purchase of new books, technology improvements, general operations, and construction, to name a few. And these grants help maintain local libraries as beacons in their communities.

As the agency that administers grants, it is incumbent on the Tennessee State Library & Archives to remind grant recipients that grant funds must be used consistent with the grant contract as well as federal, state, and local law. In fact, each grant contract from the Tennessee State Library & Archives contains a provision where the party receiving funds acknowledges that "The Grantee shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations in the performance of this Grant Contract." Each grant recipient must be mindful of the requirements of state and federal law, which can change.

For example, on January 20, 2025, President Trump signed an Executive Order entitled "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government." This Executive Order prevents federal funds (which are often present in grants from the Tennessee State Library & Archives) from being used to promote gender ideology, which the Executive Order defines as:

"Gender ideology" replaces the biological category of sex with an ever-shifting concept of self-assessed gender identity, permitting the false claim that males can identify as and thus become women and vice versa, and requiring all institutions of society to regard this false claim as true. Gender ideology includes the idea that there is a vast spectrum of genders that are disconnected from one's sex. Gender ideology is internally inconsistent, in that it diminishes sex as an identifiable or useful category but nevertheless maintains that it is possible for a person to be born in the wrong sexed body.

New laws also emerge at the state level. For example, Public Chapter 458, known as the Dismantling DEI Departments Act, was passed earlier this year. It prevents governmental entities from using discriminatory preferences to promote diversity, equity, or inclusion.

Libraries receiving grant funds must comply with laws or regulations, whether they have been in place for years or have recently become effective. If you have questions about compliance with grant contracts or federal or state law, I encourage you to contact your county attorney.

Thank you for the many ways that you are serving your community. I look forward to future visits, and I am rooting for your success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tre Hargett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Tre Hargett
Secretary of State