

State of Tennessee



The Secretary of State

State Capitol

Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0305

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.

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 with a report of the review from the Library Director.
 - 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.

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 black ink, appearing to read "Tre Hargett", with a stylized, cursive script.

Tre Hargett
Secretary of State

Enclosure: September 8, 2025, letter for reference