

# National Coalition Against Censorship

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Christopher Finan  
*Executive Director*

## NCAC PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Actors' Equity Association  
American Association of  
School Administrators  
American Association of  
University Professors  
American Association of  
University Women  
American Booksellers  
for Free Expression  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Ethical Union  
American Federation of Teachers  
American Jewish Committee  
American Library Association  
American Literary Translators  
Association  
American Orthopsychiatric Association  
American Society of Journalists  
& Authors  
Americans United for Separation of  
Church & State  
Association of American Publishers  
Authors Guild  
Catholics for Choice  
Children's Literature Association  
College Art Association  
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund  
The Creative Coalition  
Directors Guild of America  
Dramatists Guild of America  
First Amendment Lawyers Association  
International Reading Association  
Lambda Legal  
Modern Language Association  
National Center for Science Education  
National Communication Association  
National Council for the Social Studies  
National Council of Churches  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of Teachers of English  
National Education Association  
National Youth Rights Association  
The Newspaper Guild/CWA  
PEN American Center  
People for the American Way  
Planned Parenthood Federation  
of America  
Project Censored  
SAG-AFTRA  
Sexuality Information & Education  
Council of the U.S.  
Society of Children's Book Writers  
& Illustrators  
Student Press Law Center  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Union of Democratic Intellectuals  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
United Church of Christ  
Office of Communication  
United Methodist Church  
United Methodist Communications  
Women's American ORT  
Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance  
Writers Guild of America, East

August 16, 2018

Joel Tucker, Library Director  
Washington County  
220 N 300 E Washington  
Utah, 84780

Dear Mr. Tucker:

Our coalition of literary, artistic and educational organizations is deeply troubled to learn of your intention to ban all LGBTQ displays in response to isolated complaints. As organizations dedicated to promoting freedom of expression and equal rights, we wish to emphasize our concerns in the context of your First Amendment obligations. In addition, we must also note that your actions raise serious concerns about discrimination based on sexual orientation.

As public institutions, libraries may determine the time, place and manner in which materials are exhibited, but they have a constitutional obligation not to deny access to material or otherwise discriminate on the basis of viewpoint.

Not only is suppressing LGBTQ displays likely to be a violation of the First Amendment, it further marginalizes a vulnerable minority group and would set a dangerous precedent of intolerance to purportedly controversial ideas. Such a culture of prejudice is toxic in any community forum, especially the library where everyone should be equally welcome and guaranteed freedom to read, think and explore new ideas.

We regularly advise public institutions on policies and best practices to ensure they are in keeping with First Amendment principles. To that end, we encourage you to institute formal procedures to address complaints about material. We invite you to reach out to us for guidance or any clarification in adopting such procedures. We also offer you the following

guidelines, which we hope you will take into account when addressing any future complaints about LGBTQ material:<sup>1</sup>

“Exhibit Spaces and Bulletin Boards: an Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights” (although it primarily deals with community exhibits, rather than library sponsored ones) at:

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/exhibitspaces>

In addition, “Museum Best Practices for Managing Controversy” is a valuable resource for libraries mounting exhibits or providing visual resources:

<http://ncac.org/resource/museum-best-practices-for-managing-controversy>

We hope you find our guidance useful in developing your own display protocol.

Sincerely,



Chris Finan, Executive Director  
National Coalition Against Censorship



p.p.

Shedrick Davis, Regional Director  
Lambda Legal



Millie Davis, Director  
Intellectual Freedom Center  
National Council of Teachers of English

**Cc:** Wanda Huffaker, Utah Library Association  
James LaRue, American Library Association

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<sup>1</sup>Please note: The guidelines are specifically targeted at art displays, but can be used in developing general display policies.