



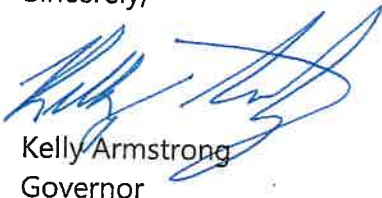
April 22, 2025

The Honorable Michelle Strinden
President of the Senate
Senate Chamber
State Capitol
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear President Strinden:

This is to inform you that on April 22, 2025, I vetoed SB 2307.

Sincerely,



Kelly Armstrong
Governor

VETO

Received by: Den Hoek Date: 4/23/25 Time: 5:04 PM



April 22, 2025

The Honorable Michelle Strinden
President of the Senate
North Dakota Senate Chambers
State Capitol
Bismarck, ND

Re: Senate Bill 2307

Dear President Strinden:

Pursuant to Article V, Section 9 of the North Dakota Constitution, I have vetoed Senate Bill 2307 and return it to the Senate.

Senate Bill 2307 aims to regulate access to materials deemed "explicit sexual material" in public and school libraries. While I recognize the concerns that led to its introduction, Senate Bill 2307 represents a misguided attempt to legislate morality through overreach and censorship. The bill imposes vague and punitive burdens on professionals and opens the door to a host of unintended and damaging consequences for our communities.

In 2023, the Legislative Assembly passed House Bill 1205, which already imposed restrictions on certain materials in public libraries. Whether or not one agreed with House Bill 1205, the bill at least operated within a specific, defined scope. Now, less than two years later, Senate Bill 2307 attempts to expand that reach further – into local government decisions and the prosecutorial discretion of state's attorneys. It is redundant, overly burdensome, and places local librarians, school districts, and state's attorneys in an untenable situation.

Any individual can complain about any book. Under Senate Bill 2307, if that individual is not satisfied with the response, they can force the library to activate "a diverse decision-making committee" to reconsider the location of the book in question. If the individual is still unsatisfied, they may request the state's attorney to issue an opinion of the alleged violation. The state's attorney is required to issue that opinion within 60 days. If the state's attorney finds a violation, they now enter a hybrid civil and criminal action where they engage one of two state agencies (the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction or the State Treasurer's Office) to withhold funding and may prosecute the offending librarian criminally. This is more process power given to an aggrieved individual than anywhere else in Century Code – more than a criminal victim, a civil plaintiff or defendant, or a fired state employee.

Any individual can force these steps to occur with a complaint about **any** book. And nothing in the law requires that individual to be a North Dakota citizen. Do we want to give non-North Dakotans that much influence over which books North Dakotans can read? Process matters. This process is completely unworkable.

But the biggest problem is that many librarians and decision-makers will be resigned to simply accommodate the individual complaint. If something is even potentially controversial to some person, eliminating it will be easier than standing up a committee or getting the state's attorney involved.

And it won't just be the books cited as examples by the supporters of this bill that will be affected. In the last 10 years *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, *Of Mice and Men*, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *The Kite Runner*, *1984*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* have all been targeted by obscenity laws. I don't pretend to know what the next literary masterpiece is going to be. But I know that I want it available in a library. And if a parent doesn't think it is age appropriate for their child, then that is a parenting decision. It does not require a whole of government approach and \$1.1 million of taxpayer money.

In today's world of social media, streaming services, websites, cable TV and movies where profanity, drug use, violence and nudity are harder to avoid than to find, the amount of time, money and taxpayer resources spent on where a book is placed in a library would be better used elsewhere.

For the reasons stated above, Senate Bill 2307 is vetoed.

Sincerely,



Kelly Armstrong
Governor

**Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota
In Regular Session Commencing Tuesday, January 7, 2025**

SENATE BILL NO. 2307
(Senators Boehm, Erbele, Hogue, Weston)
(Representatives Steiner, Tveit)

AN ACT to create and enact a new subsection to section 12.1-27.1-01 and two new sections to chapter 12.1-27.1 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the definition of a public library, required safety policies and technology protection measures, and the state's attorney's review of public libraries, school districts, and state agencies for compliance with statutes protecting minors from explicit sexual material; to amend and reenact subsection 5 of section 12.1-27.1-01, subsection 2 of section 12.1-27.1-03.1, and sections 12.1-27.1-03.5 and 12.1-27.1-11 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to obscenity control; to provide for a report to the legislative management; and to provide a penalty.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

SECTION 1. AMENDMENT. Subsection 5 of section 12.1-27.1-01 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

5. As used in this chapter, the terms "obscene material" and "obscene performance" mean material or a performance which:
 - a. Taken as a whole, the average person, applying contemporary North Dakota standards, would find predominantly appeals to a prurient interest;
 - b. Depicts or describes in a patently offensive manner sexual conduct, whether normal or perverted; and
 - c. Taken as a whole, the reasonable person would find lacking in serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

Whether material or a performance is obscene must be judged with reference to ~~ordinary~~reasonable adults, unless it appears from the character of the material or the circumstances of its dissemination that the material or performance is designed for minors or other specially susceptible audience, in which case the material or performance must be judged with reference to that type of audience.

SECTION 2. A new subsection to section 12.1-27.1-01 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted as follows:

As used in this chapter, the term "public library" means a library containing collections of books or periodicals or both for the general population to read, borrow, or refer to which is supported with funds derived from taxation.

SECTION 3. AMENDMENT. Subsection 2 of section 12.1-27.1-03.1 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

2. As used in this section:
 - a. "Nude or partially denuded human figures" means less than completely and opaquely covered human genitals, pubic regions, female breasts or a female breast, if the breast or breasts are exposed below a point immediately above the top of the areola, or human buttocks; and includes human male genitals in a discernibly turgid state even if completely and opaquely covered.

- b. "Where minors are or may be invited as a part of the general public" includes any public roadway ~~or~~, public walkway, public library, or public school library.
- c. The above ~~shall~~may not be construed to include a ~~bona fide school~~, college, university, museum, ~~public library~~, or art gallery.

SECTION 4. AMENDMENT. Section 12.1-27.1-03.5 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

12.1-27.1-03.5. Public libraries and school districts prohibited from maintaining explicit sexual material - Report.

1. As used in this section:
 - a. "Explicit sexual material" means any material which:
 - (1) Taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest of minors;
 - (2) Is patently offensive to prevailing standards in the adult community in North Dakota as a whole with respect to what is suitable material for minors; and
 - (3) Taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for minors.
 - b. "Public library" means a library established under chapter 40-38.
 - c. "School district" includes a school library or classroom library under the control of the school district.
2. A public library or a school district may not maintain in ~~its children's collection inventory books~~an area easily accessible to minors that contain explicit sexual material.
3. By January 1, ~~2024~~2026, each public library and school district shall develop a policy and process for reviewing library collections to ensure conformance with the requirements of this section. The policy must include a procedure:
 - a. ~~For the removal or relocation of explicit sexual material in the public library to an area in the library not easily accessible to minors;~~
 - b. For the development of a book and media collection that is appropriate for the age and maturity levels of the individuals who may access the materials, and which is suitable for, and consistent with, the purpose of the library or school district;
 - c. ~~For the public library to receive, evaluate, and respond to relocation of materials to an area not easily accessible to minors, upon a request from an individual regarding the removal or relocation of one or more of the books or other materials in the library collection containing~~to relocate explicit sexual material in the library collection; and
 - d. For the activation of a diverse decisionmaking committee to reconsider the relocation of explicit sexual material in the library collection, if the individual is unsatisfied with the result under subdivision c;
 - e. To refer an individual to section 7 of this Act, if the individual is unsatisfied with the result of the reconsideration under subdivision d; and
 - f. To periodically review the library collection to ensure the library collection does not contain explicit sexual material in the children's collection compliance with this section.
4. Each public library and school district shall provide a compliance report to the legislative management before May 1, ~~2024~~2026, on the implementation of collection development and

relocation of materials policies as required by this section and to ensure sufficient compliance with this section.

SECTION 5. AMENDMENT. Section 12.1-27.1-11 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

12.1-27.1-11. Exceptions to criminal liability.

Sections 12.1-27.1-01 and 12.1-27.1-03 ~~shall~~may not apply to the possession or distribution of material in the course of law enforcement, judicial, or legislative activities; or to the possession of material by a ~~bona fide school~~, college, university, museum, or public library for limited access for educational research purposes carried on at such ~~an~~the institution by adults only. Sections 12.1-27.1-01 and 12.1-27.1-03 ~~shall also~~may not apply to a person who is returning material, found to be obscene, to the distributor or publisher initially delivering it to the person returning it.

SECTION 6. A new section to chapter 12.1-27.1 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted as follows:

Safety policies and technology protection measures required - Report.


1. As used in this section:
 - a. "Explicit sexual material" means the term as defined under section 12.1-27.1-03.5.
 - b. "Public library" does not include the state library.
 - c. "State agency" does not include the state library or institutions of higher education.
2. A school district, state agency, or public library may offer digital or online library database resources to students in kindergarten through grade twelve if the person providing the resources verifies all the resources comply with subsection 3.
3. Digital or online library database resources offered by a school district, state agency, or public library to students in kindergarten through grade twelve must have safety policies and technology protection measures that:
 - a. Prohibit and prevent a user of the resource from sending, receiving, viewing, or downloading materials constituting an obscene performance or explicit sexual material; and
 - b. Filter or block access to explicit sexual material.
4. Notwithstanding any contract provision, if a provider of digital or online library resources fails to comply with subsection 3, the school district, state agency, or public library shall withhold any further payments to the provider pending verification of compliance.
5. If a provider of digital or online library database resources fails to timely verify the provider is in compliance with the safety policies and requirements of subsection 3, the school district, state agency, or public library shall consider the provider's act of noncompliance a breach of contract.
6. A public school library and a public library shall submit an aggregate written report to the legislative management no later than December first of each year regarding any:
 - a. Issues related to provider compliance with technology protection measures required by subsection 3; and
 - b. Incidents of complaints regarding accessible materials.

7. By January 1, 2026, each school district, state agency, or public library offering digital or online library database resources to students in kindergarten through grade twelve shall develop a policy and process for reviewing digital or online library database resources to ensure conformance with this section. The policy must include a procedure:
- a. For an individual to report to the school district, state agency, or public library materials containing explicit sexual material or an obscene performance in the digital or online library database resources;
 - b. Upon receipt of a report under subdivision a, for the school district, state agency, or public library, to provide the report to the provider of digital or online library database resources and apprise the individual of the actions taken to comply with this section; and
 - c. To refer an individual to section 7 of this Act, if the individual believes this section is being violated after being apprised of the actions taken to comply with the section.

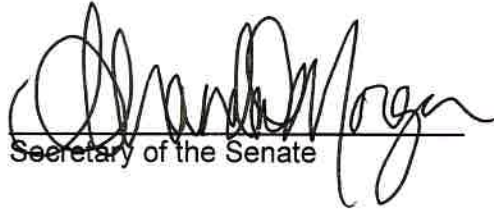
SECTION 7. A new section to chapter 12.1-27.1 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted as follows:

State's attorney - Obscenity review procedure - School districts - State agencies - Public libraries - Penalty.

1. Any interested individual who has exhausted the procedures under section 12.1-27.1-03.5 or section 6 of this Act may request, in the manner prescribed by the local state's attorney, the local state's attorney's opinion to review an alleged violation under section 12.1-27.1-03.5 or section 6 of this Act. Within sixty days of receiving the request, the state's attorney shall issue an opinion on the alleged violation to the interested individual, the provider of digital or online library database resources, if any, and the school district, state agency, or public library under review.
2. If the state's attorney determines a public library or state agency has violated section 12.1-27.1-03.5 or section 6 of this Act, the state's attorney shall defer any prosecution and notify the public library or state agency. After receiving notice, the public library or state agency shall take corrective action to comply with the violated law within ten days. If the public library or state agency fails to comply with the law within ten days, the state's attorney:
 - a. Shall notify the state treasurer who shall withhold and return funds allocated to the state agency or public library, until the state's attorney has determined the state agency or public library is in compliance with the relevant statute and has notified the state treasurer accordingly; and
 - b. May prosecute for failure to comply with the law.
3. If the state's attorney determines a school district has violated section 12.1-27.1-03.5 or section 6 of this Act, the state's attorney shall defer any prosecution and notify the school district. After receiving notice, the school district shall take corrective action to comply with the violated law within ten days. If the school district fails to comply with the law within ten days, the state's attorney:
 - a. Shall notify the superintendent of public instruction who shall withhold funds allocated to the school district until the state's attorney has determined the school district is in compliance with the relevant statute and has notified the superintendent of public instruction accordingly; and
 - b. May prosecute for failure to comply with the law.


President of the Senate


Speaker of the House


Secretary of the Senate


Chief Clerk of the House

This certifies that the within bill originated in the Senate of the Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota and is known on the records of that body as Senate Bill No. 2307.

Senate Vote: Yeas 27 Nays 20 Absent 0

House Vote: Yeas 49 Nays 45 Absent 0


Secretary of the Senate

Received by the Governor at 3:25 P M. on April 18th, 2025.

Approved at _____ M. on _____, 2025.

Governor


Filed in this office this 29th day of April, 2025,
at 12:15 o'clock P M.


Secretary of State


Honorable Michael Howe
Secretary of State
Bismarck, North Dakota

I certify this Act, Senate Bill No. 2307, together with the objections of Governor Armstrong, was returned to the Senate, being the body in which it originated, on April 24, 2025; that the objections of the Governor were entered upon the Journal on April 25, 2025; that the Bill was taken up for reconsideration; that the motion for reconsideration failed on April 25, 2025, at 1:15 p.m.; and the roll was called and the Bill failed to pass, with less than two-thirds of the members-elect voting in the affirmative.

Vote:	Yeas	25
	Nays	20
	Absent and not voting	2



President of the Senate



Secretary of the Senate