

## **RESOLUTION NO. 2025-1**

### **RESOLUTION DECLARING TETON COUNTY LIBRARY A BOOK SANCTUARY**

WHEREAS, the freedom to read is a human right and individuals have the right to free inquiry and the equally important right to form their own opinions; and

WHEREAS, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers;" and

WHEREAS, the United States of America was the first government to acknowledge and protect these individual rights by means of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution; and

WHEREAS, these rights are further protected by Article 1, Section 20 of the Wyoming Constitution which states in part, "every person may freely speak, write, and publish on all subjects," and

WHEREAS, Article 1, Section 7 of the Wyoming Constitution states, "absolute, arbitrary power over the lives, liberty, and property of freemen exists nowhere in a republic, not even in the largest majority," and

WHEREAS, the Teton County Board of County Commissioners previously adopted a resolution celebrating the First Amendment as well as our diverse and pluralistic nation that has endured and thrived because we have been able to reject the forces of extremism and bigotry and stand together throughout our long history of striving to be a more perfect union; and

WHEREAS, in previous years the Teton County Library Board formally adopted the Library Bill of Rights which affirmed the Teton County Library's commitment to certain values and policies based on ensuring the free expression and exchange of ideas including:

- Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

- Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

WHEREAS, in previous years the Teton County Library Board formally adopted the Freedom to Read Statement, originally issued in May 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which still resonates today and states in part:

- It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.
- The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.
- Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.
- It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.
- The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

WHEREAS, books do not require readers to agree with topics or themes but instead allow readers to explore and engage with differing perspectives to form and inform their own views; and

WHEREAS, Teton County Library strives to address the needs of all segments of Teton County's heterogeneous community for timely information that will prepare users to address the issues that impact them and the community; and

WHEREAS, Teton County Library's collections strive to represent diverse points of view both to reflect the community and to support the free exchange of contrasting views and ideas that are critical to democracy; and

WHEREAS, Teton County Library provides that access without endorsing or agreeing with every idea in circulation; and

WHEREAS, it is contrary to a democratic spirit and the free exchange of ideas to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author; and

WHEREAS, it is contrary to a democratic spirit and the free exchange of ideas to label, judge, censor, and/or segregate works as subversive or dangerous and inhibit public access to controversial material; and

WHEREAS, book bans often seek to impose restrictions based on the political, ideological, or cultural preferences of the individuals calling for book bans; and

WHEREAS, over the last several years, there has been a significant increase in censorship activities at the national, state, and local levels resulting in books being removed from library shelves and schools across the United States; and

WHEREAS, censorship activities implemented to ban books and access to books are often targeted at books written by and about LGBTQ+ persons, people of color, outsiders, newcomers, and people from marginalized backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, the Teton County Library Board of Directors declare their opposition to the banning of books in any form anywhere; and

WHEREAS, the Teton County Library Board of Directors affirms a diversity of experiences and perspectives and recognizes the equal humanity and dignity of all persons; and

WHEREAS, the Teton County Library Board of Directors embraces the freedom to read as a cornerstone of democracy; and

WHEREAS, the Teton County Library Board of Directors recommits to its 2021 endorsement of the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read Statement, and Freedom to View Statement; and

WHEREAS, Teton County Library has a materials selection process that is fair, deliberative, equitable, and accessible as set forth in its Collection Development Policy adopted by the Teton County Library Board of Directors on March 16, 2023; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Teton County Library Board of Directors declares that the Teton County Library is a book sanctuary library.

As a book sanctuary library, Teton County Library shall be a place to: borrow and read challenged and banned books, make challenged and banned books accessible pursuant to the standards of quality and diversity that constitute Teton County Library's own collection development policy, host programs and events that may include challenged or banned books, and educate others on the history of book banning and censorship.

Adopted on this 9<sup>TH</sup> day of JANUARY, 2025.

**Teton County Library Board of Directors**

Lisa McGee

Lisa McGee, Board Chair

Stan Steiner

Stan Steiner, Board Secretary