



**207 E. Buffalo Street, #325
Milwaukee, WI 53202-5774**

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**Contact: Christopher Ahmuty, Executive Director, (414) 272-4032, ext. 13
Emilio De Torre, Youth and Program Director (414) 305-8569**

ACLU of Wisconsin: NO TO CENSORSHIP IN WEST BEND PUBLIC LIBRARY

Milwaukee --The West Bend Community Memorial Library Board on Tuesday evening postponed consideration of a complaint filed over gay-themed books in the library's young adult collection. Over 200 people came to the board's scheduled meeting, including a representative of the ACLU of Wisconsin. When the library takes up the issue, the ACLU of Wisconsin believes it should follow young adult policies that ensure materials are accessible, inclusive, and appropriate for young readers.

"I heard a lot of misinformation about gays and lesbians from would be censors at the meeting," said ACLU of Wisconsin Youth and Programs Director Emilio De Torre. "Libraries are about intellectual freedom. I went to support those who want our libraries to be places that serve all community members young and old."

Before the meeting was dismissed, informal discussion among the community members reflected divided opinions: some wanted gay-themed books to be removed entirely, while others argued for youth-oriented books to be moved to the adult section. Among those who supported youth rights, teachers and advocates wanted the age-appropriate materials to stay and remain available.

"Libraries need to follow policies that serve their communities," said ACLU of Wisconsin Executive Director Chris Ahmuty. "Parents are responsible for guiding their own children's use of the library. Censors should not pressure libraries to take away that responsibility and right from other parents. It is especially distressing when censorship may harm young people by denying them access to information."

Ahmuty concluded, "Censoring gay-themed books or moving age appropriate materials to another more restrictive section would be a violation of First Amendment principles. The ACLU of Wisconsin will continue to monitor development in West Bend closely."

The ACLU of Wisconsin is a membership organization defending the civil liberties and rights of all Wisconsin residents. Visit www.aclu-wi.org.

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