

September 27, 2016

Board of Commissioners
Douglas County Oregon
1036 S.E. Douglas Avenue
Roseburg, Oregon 97470

Dear Commissioners Boice, Freeman, and Mason:

The Oregon Library Association's mission is to provide advocacy, education, leadership and collaboration to continually strengthen Oregon's libraries and the communities we serve. It is in that spirit of advocacy that I write to you today. It has come to our attention that the website and social media account of the Douglas County Library System were temporarily disabled in order to remove impartial content relating to the upcoming ballot measure 10-145, which would create a library district.

Oregon's Secretary of State outlines specific allowable actions that may be undertaken by public employees in regards to political campaigning, as I'm sure you're aware. One such allowable action is to "prepare and distribute impartial written material or make an impartial presentation that discusses election subjects (using the guidelines provided in the Secretary of State's detailed manual on ORS 260.432.)". The content that was scrubbed from the library's website and social media account was informational, and thus met the criteria for allowable inclusion in library communication.

On behalf of the Oregon Library Association, I ask you to reconsider the unprecedented removal of this information. The library community is opposed to the suppression of voter information of any kind, as it is indeed tantamount to censorship and greatly inhibits democratic discourse in our country. The citizens of Douglas County have a right to access information that would enable them to make a more educated decision regarding the library district measure. Indeed, Douglas County residents have a fine history of demanding information and accountability regarding government actions. This decision flies in the face of that honorable history.

One of the most important roles that a library plays in its community is to act as a forum for the sharing of information in a professional and unbiased manner. It is an unconscionable act to stifle and suppress that very important role, especially when it costs us an informed citizenry.

Thank you,

Elsa Loftis
President, Oregon Library Association