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Wednesday, June 3, 2009

West Bend Official Attacked for Suggesting Public Library Books May Be Pornographic; Free Speech Advocate Uses Ethics Complaint to Silence Official

In West Bend, WI, an apparent advocate of allowing children access to inappropriate material is using an ethics complaint to cut off the free speech of a governmental official. The official's crime? He implied the public library should not contain pornographic material for children.

I learned about this shocking tactic here: "[Vrana Accused of Ethics Violation](#)," by **Owen, Boots & Sabers**, 2 June 2009. He linked to "[Alderman May Face Probe of his Ethics; Terry Vrana Said Some Books in Library are Pornographic](#)," by **Dave Rank**, *West Bend Daily News*, 2 June 2009, p.A1.

As **Dan Gerstein** said, "[The ... elites have convinced themselves that they are taking a stand against cultural tyranny. \[T\]he reality is that it is those who cry 'Censorship!' the loudest who are the ones trying to stifle speech and force their moral world-view on others.](#)" Can anyone argue the ethics complaint by city resident **Kristina Smithers** is *not* an effort to stifle speech and force an "anything goes" world-view on others, including children?

People who say the library material for children is not pornographic are trying to shut up those who say it might be. Shutting up an elected governmental official means shutting up all the people who voted for him. A possible free speech violation (as a frivolous or vexatious ethics complaint might be) is being used to oppose claimed free speech violations. Based on that injustice alone, it is easy to see who represents whom and which position is more credible.

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**Alderman May Face Probe of his Ethics;
Terry Vrana Said Some Books in Library are Pornographic**

By DAVE RANK Daily News Staff

The West Bend Ethics Committee will decide if a complaint filed against city Alderman Terry Vrana over comments he made about the city's library and the Library Board is serious enough to hold a hearing.

City resident Kristina Smithers filed a complaint against Vrana Friday afternoon.

Monday night, Vrana said he had no comment about Smithers' complaint, adding that anyone

can look at the video of the Common Council session in question and make up their own minds.

“There was no ethics violation,” said Alderman Michael Schlotfeldt, who sits next to Vrana, volunteering a statement.

City attorney Mary Schanning said she had a chance to look at the complaint Monday.

“Basically, what we do is give it to the Ethics Committee,” Schanning said of the procedure to deal with a complaint about the actions of a city official.

The five-member Ethics Committee first decides if the allegation would constitute a violation of the city’s ethics code if proven to be true, Schanning said.

If the committee members decide the allegation reaches that level, then the committee would schedule a hearing to determine the truth of the allegations, the city attorney said.

The Ethics Committee does not meet on a regular basis, she said, and no meeting is yet arranged to discuss Smithers’ allegation. Smithers alleges statements Vrana made during an April 21 Common Council meeting during debate over the reappointment of four Library Board members demonstrated unethical behavior because: He did not act in an independent, impartial manner; His “conduct did not reenforce the public’s confidence in the integrity of the city government;” “(H)e used his aldermanic position to purport his personal philosophy not that of the city as a whole.” Vrana had expressed an opinion that pornographic books were in the library’s young adult section.

What do you think?

Should an ethics hearing be held over Alderman Terry Vrana’s comment that some books in the city library are pornographic? Why? Give your opinions to the Daily News via e-mail at dailynews@conley.net, by fax at 338-1984 or write to 100 S. Sixth Ave., West Bend, WI 53095. Limit your opinions, which will be considered for publication as a letter to the editor, to 300 words and include your name, municipality of residence and phone number