



MISSOURI SENATE

Jane Cunningham
7th Senate District

JEFFERSON CITY

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Senate Panel Hears Support of Sen. Jane Cunningham's Bill Restricting Placement in Public Libraries of Sexually Explicit Content Available to Children

*Senate Bill 450 Seeks to Protect Children as Young as Age 11
From Obscene and Pornographic Material
Contained in Scores of Children's Library Books*

JEFFERSON CITY — A Senate panel today heard testimony in support of a bill sponsored by Sen. Jane Cunningham, R-Chesterfield, that would require Missouri libraries to do more to protect children from exposure to sexually explicit material found in a number of books available in teen sections of public libraries.

Senator Cunningham's [Senate Bill 450](#) seeks to ensure libraries have written policies on the placement of books and other materials containing obscene or pornographic material to require a parent's permission for access.

"The adult material found in a vast array of books targeted to pre-teen audiences is just shocking, and I'm sure not one parent would disagree with me that the sexually graphic content contained in them is highly inappropriate and potentially very harmful," said Sen. Cunningham. "Most disconcerting to me was that a St. Louis County Library official stated in a public meeting that as long as they can get young people to read, the content of the books was unimportant."

Among those testifying in support of the bill was Laura Kostial of Ellisville, Dr. John Splinter, St. Louis Executive Director of the National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families, former state Representative Carl Hendrickson, chairman of the St. Louis-based Citizens Against Pornography and Lois Linton, a former board member of the St. Louis County Library system.

Kostial testified she became aware of the sexually graphic material in some teen books a couple of years ago when her 11-year-old daughter came across some questionable book titles in the teen's section of a St. Louis County library designed for readers ages 11 to 16.

“I don’t support censorship, but I believe every parent has the right to make the determination what is appropriate for their own children,” said Kostial, who distributed a list of sexually graphic books and their content to Senate panel members.

During his testimony in support the bill, Dr. Splinter informed the Senate panel that research indicates pornography is being targeted to children as young as ages 8 to 13 and exposure to this type of sexually graphic material and can be directly correlated to increases in teenage sexual activity, sexually transmitted diseases, and higher rates of teen suicide.

“Let’s use some wisdom here to protect our children,” Splinter said. “We value the First Amendment, but just because we can have these kinds of books in the library doesn’t mean we should do so irresponsibly.”

Former state lawmaker Hendrickson said the chief concern of his group, Citizens Against Pornography, is educating parents about the kind of sexually explicit material readily available to teens.

“We don’t want books banned, we just want parents to understand the content of the books to make an informed decision,” Hendrickson said.

Senators were shocked by the content and refused to let the teen books be quoted in the public hearing due to the graphic nature contained in them. Senate Bill 450 was unanimously approved by the General Laws Committee.

A sampling of sexually graphic books being made available to children through the teen sections of many public libraries is available at <http://knowyourlibrary.org/Bookexcerpts.aspx>.

For further information about Sen. Jane Cunningham and her legislation, you may visit her Senate website at www.senate.mo.gov/cunningham or contact her Chief of Staff, Lucy LePage, at (573) 751-1186.

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