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Camdenton school board attorney plans to fight ACLU lawsuit, citizens offer opinions

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lakewnewsonline.com

Posted Sep 09, 2011 @ 06:18 AM

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Camdenton, Mo. — A continuing civil lawsuit between the American Civil Liberties Union and the Camdenton R-III School District is still stirring up taxpayers.

Despite the numbers telling the district to do whatever it takes to fight, there are a few voices asking the school board to take a step back and think about their action before rushing into their decision.

"I don't think this is about student's right to question," Sarah Ryder explained to the board, but rather, their right to get factual information.

Too many issues have been romanticized by TV and movies, Ryder said, and kids need a safe place to get the facts. If they can't get that at school, where can they get that? Ryder questioned.

Ryder remains in the minority against many who feel the district should fight the civil lawsuit.

"We're telling the minority rules rather than the majority," Tim Scott told the Board of Education at special meeting held earlier this week.

It was the board's second special meeting in as many weeks to revise Internet usage policies for students.

On Wednesday, the revision applied to the procedures that needed to be followed when a website is currently unblocked and a student, parent of a student or district taxpayer feels that is should be blocked.

"When these kinds of issues come up, it's one person causing a lot of issues for a lot of people," Audrey Chaney said about the lawsuit.

She as well encouraged the district to fight.

The district's attorney, Thomas Mickes, said he intends to.

"There's no rollover in this board and there's no rollover in me," Mickes said.

The ACLU claims the district is violating First Amendment rights because the district's Internet filter is too restrictive. The ACLU is not arguing the use of Internet-filtering software in public schools, but believes the district's software is prejudicially blocking websites from student access. Specifically, the lawsuit is siting access to non-sexual websites that are supportive of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people but permits access to websites that condemn homosexuality.

Recently, a high school student joined the suit. Unnamed in court documents, she claims bullies taunt homosexual, bisexual and other students who they think might be gay.

When she went to look up information on the school's computers, information about anti-bullying for her friends was blocked.

She said she is embarrassed to ask for the sites to be unblocked in case school officials question her about her sexuality or the bullies find out and taunt her further.

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stillshocked

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I am thrilled to hear some good news like this. I support the school for fighting this. It does not belong in school. !!!! Keep up the fight for our kids safety!!

CHS Student

2 weeks ago

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I attend Camdenton High School, and I am currently on their network at the school. After a simple Google search, using the school network, I checked the first thirty pages (all containing valid LGBT information) and only one of these pages were blocked.

The address of this site is: http://www.lambdalegal.org/publications/factsheets/fs_preventing-censorship-of-lgbt-information-in-public-school-libraries.html

Which, I managed to find my way onto (most high school students know how to use a proxy server...), and it contains nothing as described by the lawsuit. In fact, I do not even know why it was blocked, most likely just filtered for some reason. Not specifically blocked by the school.

With 29 of these LGBT sites, a student that is using the schools network should certainly be able to find all the information that they need to learn all about the topic, themselves, and any other information they seek.

-CHS Student

woodpest

2 weeks ago

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Ms. Ryder- home with your parents if you can't feel safe enough at home to discuss this, find a clergy or a counselor, but it is not the districts responsibility to educate on social or moral issues. Thank God Camdenton has this figured out. Camdenton Schools- for what it is worth Miller County Baptist Association in annual meeting Saturday unanimously resolved to support Camdenton School District in it's fight against the ACLU.

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