

HB 1054

Rep Barbara Norton has pre-filed House Bill 1054 which would require every publicly funded library in the state – public, university, and school – to set up a separate African American section in the library for fiction and non-fiction books. Read the full text here: <http://www.legis.state.la.us/billdata/streamdocument.asp?did=689742>

The bill has been assigned to the Municipal, Parochial, and Public Affairs Committee, of which she is a member. A list of all the committee members can be found below.

Given the shaky financial condition of the state, including local governments, universities and school systems, the most effective rationale against supporting the bill would be an economic one. Libraries would find it very difficult to absorb the cost of implementing this bill. To create a new section in a library requires locating and pulling the books from shelves, re-classifying each book, re-labeling each book, moving other books - possibly most of the collection - to make room for a new section, and re-shelving books. It would also require purchasing supplies to accomplish this task; this might include the need to purchase new shelving to have space for a distinct, separate section. These are labor- and time-intensive tasks and would have a negative impact on library services to the public during the period of time involved to accomplish this job, as well as taking the materials out of circulation during this time. We have calculated the cost to accomplish this in an average school library to be around \$1800, factoring in staff time and cost of supplies and shelving.

If the enactment of this legislation would affect your library, I encourage you to contact your representative and senator as well as members of the committee.

When contacting legislators, it is always important to be succinct and write a letter or email no more than one page in length. In addition, a positive, courteous and professional approach always works best. Be sure to end by thanking them for their public service to the citizens of Louisiana.

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