

Summary of August 12, 2010 Financial Literacy Seminar

The library was approached by Dan Shrigley from Congresswoman Bean's office on July 29th requesting use of the library's meeting room for the sole purpose of providing space to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office and U.S. Congresswoman Bean to present a financial literacy seminar to residents on August 12th. The library's director approved the use of the library's meeting room, since this seminar met with the library's mission to

The Round Lake Area Public Library provides current information, formal education support, independent learning opportunities and life enrichment materials to a highly diverse public in a warm and welcoming atmosphere through a highly trained team of individuals committed to quality service, who will nurture a love for reading and learning.

The library received a phone call from someone on Monday, August 9th who was very agitated at the library for allowing a Congressional representative at the library while we did not post this event on our calendar. This person went on to ask "Why is the library intentionally hiding the Congresswoman from her constituents?" "Why is the library working for the Congresswoman?" "Why is the library allowing the Congresswoman to hide from her constituents?" "Why is the library using tax payer money to do work for a politician?" After responding to each of the caller's questions, the caller then stated, "What happens if someone comes to your library and video tapes the seminar?" The caller was told that the library has no video recording policy, so that would be allowed. The caller then asked "What will happen if someone comes to this program and is disruptive or causes any problems? What will you do?" The caller was told that the library does have a behavior policy and that if any patron disregards this policy, staff will ask that patron to abide by the policy for the sake of all patrons. The caller was then told that if the behavior continues, the person will be asked to discontinue the disruptive behavior or leave, and if staff have to ask a third time, the person will be asked to leave the library. The caller said he was not happy with the library and stated that if he cannot attend the seminar, then he will have someone else attend, and "we'll have to see what happens." I immediately notified Congresswoman Bean's office about this call. They indicated they have had a few instances in which seminar attendees have "gotten in the face of the Congresswoman and generally been disruptive at these events." Being concerned for the safety of everyone attending the financial literacy seminar, I notified the Round Lake Police Department of the statements from the caller and from Bean's office. The Police Department did have two officers stay in the library's lobby the evening of the seminar.

On the night of the seminar, representatives from the Illinois State Treasurer's Office and the Congresswoman's office arrived around 6:30 to make sure the meeting room was setup and the computer and projector worked.

The library opened the meeting room to the public at 7:15.

Approximately 45 people attended this financial education lecture.

Library staff introduced the seminar, thanking the Congresswoman and the Illinois State Treasurer's Office for providing a financial literacy seminar. Library staff did also tell the audience that the library expects everyone will have a chance to ask some questions, but the library also expects each individual making statements and asking questions to do so while exhibiting respect to ALL patrons present at the seminar.

Congresswoman Bean spoke for about 20 minutes. The Congresswoman asked for audience questions. Several people asked questions. During this Q&A time, several attendees asked the Congresswoman questions. After the Q&A time ended, the Congresswoman turned the microphone over to the Illinois State Treasurer's representative. Very shortly after this person started to speak, several people were disruptive (interjecting comments by yelling and "firing" questions at both the Illinois Treasurer's presenter and the Congresswoman and derailing the seminar from its intended purpose), rude (disregarding the learning experience sought by those who attended the educational focused seminar) and repeatedly refused, when asked by both presenters, and two library employees, to respect the listening and learning rights of ALL attendees present at the seminar. It took several minutes for the crowd to return the floor to the Illinois Treasurer's representative.

Library security staff did ask two audience participants to allow others to speak twice during the seminar. Library staff were present throughout the seminar, and video from library cameras clearly show that the audience is discussing their issues amongst themselves and directing questions to the presenters throughout the seminar; several participants are seen facing each other and gesticulating to express their verbal comments. During this exchange, library staff are simply standing to the side of the audience, while watching the Congresswoman and the audience. It should also be noted that TWO of Melissa Bean's representatives are as close to the crowd as library staff are.

About 15 people left the seminar after Congresswoman Bean left the library at around 8:30. It is apparent these individuals did not want to participate in the educational seminar, as the financial literacy seminar lasted another half hour. The group that did leave continued to voice their concerns about the Congresswoman's actions before dispersing from library property.

The financial literacy seminar ended around 9:10, with individual questions being asked of the State Treasurer's representative for a bit longer. During this time, five patrons approached library staff to express their concern that the seminar was disrupted by such "rude" people. Everyone who approached library staff commented that they were not able to fully appreciate the information presented in the seminar due to the constant interruptions from the crowd. Everyone also stated that they were surprised to see police in the library, but they were glad the police were there, that they were afraid to

ask any questions, and they were afraid for their safety, especially after seeing someone carrying a gun on his hip.

On Monday, August 16th, library staff received several phone calls, voicemails, and e-mails from people stating their dissatisfaction with the library for a number of reasons. This list of reasons includes such comments as, “you should be ashamed of yourselves for allowing this kind of intimidation to happen at your library.” “Your library is appalling to America for preventing a U.S Congresswoman from talking to her constituents.” “The guy in that room should watch his back.” “A glock would take care of the security guard.” And so on. The library received calls almost nonstop the morning of the 16th. Later that morning the library found out that someone who attended the seminar had posted a 6 minute video clip of the seminar. The video focused on the Congresswoman and on a library employee who was at the event.

Three links to use for reference to this video include:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iF0_jJRXPbQ

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMt1ZIIb79A>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtYGWkML0Qo>

Library staff contacted legal counsel and Trustees after being made aware of this situation. Counsel and library staff drafted a note to the library’s website in response to questions. Library staff also contacted Congresswoman Bean’s office who indicated they were also receiving several comments about the financial literacy seminar.

SUMMARY POINTS:

- The library had security at this event to protect the rights of all citizens attending this literacy seminar, not just the rights of those who wanted to control the discussion for their own reasons.
- This event was never designed to be or advertised as a “town hall” meeting.
- The congresswoman was only supposed to speak for about 15-20 minutes, while the Illinois State Treasurer’s Office was to present an hour long seminar.
- Someone showed up to the library with an exposed firearm. The library is grateful to the Round Lake Police Department, who was already onsite and could intercede to greet this person on behalf of the library. Granted this person was an off duty police officer, but the audience did not know this.
- The video of this seminar was condensed from a 1 1/2 hour program to a 6 minute video. The video was edited to focus in on one individual, was not shown in real-time (was shown in slow motion for effect), while the audio recording was also played to repeat over and over at times not congruent with

the video. This video is NOT representative of the actual events that took place at the library.

- The residents that pay taxes to the Round Lake Area Library now have to pay for legal counsel to address violent threats against library staff made by people who do NOT live in this district and pay taxes here. Round Lake Area Library tax payers also have to pay for time it has taken several library staff to review this issue, rather than focus on other issues, such as drafting a balanced budget, completing grant applications, and finalizing State required annual reports.
- Comments made by those on various internet sites have come from individuals that clearly did not attend the financial literacy seminar, and therefore, clearly do NOT have first-hand knowledge of the events that took place during the seminar.
- Violent threats were made against a library employee by individuals not present at the seminar. These individuals have no corroboration of the events that took place that evening. The only information they have is from those that have posted comments to various blog sites.
- Not one single person was touched by any library staff, asked to leave the building, or prevented from speaking.
- Several individuals spoke their concerns on numerous occasions; the library did not impede any conversation beyond simple manners everyone should have learned in first grade.
- The library followed its Meeting Room Policy as written. This policy can be found on the library's website at <http://www.rlapl.org/about/library-policies/meeting-room-policy/> . Please note that in keeping with this policy, Congresswoman Bean will be sent a letter requesting reimbursement of \$50 since the seminar extended beyond the library's 8:00 closing time.
- The library followed its Patron Conduct policy as written.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY THE LIBRARY:

Did the library advertise this event?

The library did not advertise this seminar. The library does not advertise any outside events – groups and organizations that hold events at the library as opposed to library-sponsored meetings and programs. No library funds were spent on or for this event. The library would like to further state that the only advertisement it knows of this event clearly indicates this was to be a financial literacy seminar – an educational function – as indicated by the script of this automated call to Congresswoman Bean's residents.

Financial Literacy Workshop

August XX, 2010

Hi, this is Melissa Bean, your representative in Congress, inviting you to attend my financial literacy forum on DAY, Aug. DATE at TIME p.m.

Please join me and presenters from the State Treasurer's Office for tips on how to best manage credit card use, avoid common credit-card pitfalls. You can also learn about the recently signed Wall Street Reform law to better protect your investments and our system from future financial crises and bailouts as well as the recently enacted Credit Card Bill of Rights.

Again, this is Congresswoman Melissa Bean, if you can, join me at LOCATION, ADDRESS, on August DATE at TIME p.m. As always, it's an honor to serve you. Thank you so much.

Why did the library provide security at this event?

The library received a threat of behavioral misconduct prior to the event. The library has a responsibility to ensure all patrons attending any library events receive the same level of use as everyone else in attendance.

Why was the library intimidating constituents? Why was a library employee intimidating visitors to the library? Why were they trying to silence taxpayers attending a public meeting?

One theme that continued to appear in several blog posts accused library staff of intimidating seminar attendees. A review of the library's camera video of this event shows library staff seen politely asking attendees to allow others to speak on two different occasions. Attendees are seen continuing to talk and clearly gesticulating during their conversation during the seminar - all while library staff are present at the seminar. It is the library's determination that library staff, therefore, did not impede anyone's rights to free speech. The library would like to further state that library staff did not attend the entire seminar; there are several occasions that staff step outside the meeting room during either presenter's seminar.

The library's attorney, the Round Lake Police Department, and Illinois State's Attorney's have reviewed the video shown on YouTube, and none found any intimidating behavior by library staff.

Why were people being kicked out of a public meeting?

One person was asked to leave the financial literacy seminar several minutes after Congresswoman Bean had concluded her discussion and the Illinois State Treasurer's representative was well into his seminar. The person who was asked to leave had been asked three times to discontinue interrupting others asking their questions. This person was asked to leave after he bumped into the back of a library employee on his way to the front of the meeting room while video recording the presenters. The library employee asked the person to leave the meeting room to allow the Illinois Treasurer's representative to continue his seminar. The person was invited to stay in the library until after the seminar ended; he was asked only to leave the meeting room, not the library. This person was also one of the individuals video recording this seminar. The library would again like to remind readers that the purpose of this seminar was to provide educational information to residents, not to hold an open forum for any political candidate, therefore, this person's behavior was outside the scope of acceptable behavior at this type of event.

What will happen to library staff that attended this financial literacy seminar?

As stated above, the library's attorney, the Round Lake Police Department, and Illinois State's Attorney's have reviewed the video shown on YouTube, and none found any intimidating behavior by library staff. The library would like to further state that since potentially violent threats have been made against a library employee, the library is obligated to provide assistance to the employee.

Why is the library supporting a political candidate?

The library is an "apolitical" organization, meaning that we do not get involved with political causes. The library does not endorse any political candidate, political party, group, or organization. The literacy event held at the library was meant to provide educational assistance, not support for any political candidate.

Was taxpayer money used to provide assistance to Melissa Bean?

The library provided meeting room space to residents of the library district and to presenters from the Illinois State Treasurer's Office and Congresswoman Bean. Staff who attended this seminar did so as part of their regular work schedule; nothing beyond their normal salary for any library event.

Whose tax payer money paid for this event?

The library receives over 95% of its revenue from residents that live inside the Round Lake Area Library's district. The library does not receive any money from

federal government, therefore, those outside the Round Lake Area Library district who have concerns need not worry about their tax money being routed to this library. There is also no relationship between the work done by any U.S. senator or representative and a financial impact on the library. The remaining 5% of revenue for the library comes from state grants, copies made by patrons, some fines, donations, interest, sale of soda and snacks, and various other local sources.

Who shot the video of the seminar?

The library does not take attendance at events other than public meetings of official public business. The library does not have a record of the two individuals who took video at this event.

Who can I contact to ask questions or voice concerns?

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