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'I stand by my decision'



An audience member at a Rutherford County Library System Board meeting March 30 holds a "I Stand with Luanne Ethics Matter" sign prior to the majority of the board firing Director Luanne James for refusing to move over 100 children's LGBTQIA books to adult section. Over 240 people packed the meeting at the Rutherford County Courthouse in downtown Murfreesboro. SCOTT BRODEN/THE DAILY NEWS JOURNAL

Rutherford Co. library director fired for refusing to move LGBTQIA children's books

Scott Broden
Murfreesboro Daily News Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

Rutherford County Library System Director Luanne James lost her job March 30 for refusing her board's directive to move over 100 children's LGBTQIA books to adult section.

"I stand by my decision," James said prior to the board voting 8-3 to fire her. "I will not change my mind."

Most of the 240-plus people packing the Rutherford County Courthouse in downtown Murfreesboro applauded James and booed the majority of the county library board at its special-called meeting to fire James.

"Shame on you!" Tatiana Silvas shouted after the majority decision.

Eight of the 10 public comment speakers at the meeting, including Silvas and Louisa Lamm, supported James. Lamm told the board that placing children's books in the adult section means they won't get checked out and could end up being pulled from the shelves like other materials not being checked out.

"Children's books about trans people and LGBTQIA+ people do not harm children," said Lamm, adding that she always accompanies her son to the library to educate and protect him. "These books simply introduce inclusive language and viewpoints to early readers."

Two of the speakers, including elected



James

"I am disappointed that I lost my job... for doing exactly what librarians are supposed to do: protect the rights of all community members to access books and information."

Luanne James in a statement

Rutherford County Board of Education member Caleb Tidwell, backed the majority board decision March 16 to move 132 books to protect children.

Tidwell started his speech with a prayer and said the books in question are inappropriate for children.

The other speaker supporting the majority decision incited "boos" from many in the audience by saying the books in question appeal to "Godlessness" and are "perverse" and "satanic" and that "judgement" will fall on those promoting the books.

James emails board about her decision to leave books

James emailed board members March 18 to inform them she refuses to move the LGBTQIA books because that "would compromise my professional obligation to oppose government-mandated viewpoint discrimination."

"Doing so would violate the First Amendment right of all citizens of Rutherford County and myself," James said in the email to the library board, obtained by The Daily News Journal.

The majority of board members who agreed to fire James are Chairman Cody York, Vice Chairman Sam Huddleston, Secretary Susan Quesenberry, Treasurer Beth Duffield, John Curtis, Jeffrey Wiencek, Dina Piazza and Darrell Thomas.

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Trump seeks control over mail-in voting

Executive order would give USPS oversight on ballots

Zac Anderson
USA TODAY

President Donald Trump moved to exert federal control over voter rolls and mail-in ballots with an executive order that cracks down on a form of voting he frequently criticizes, even as he used it to cast his own ballot this year.

The move escalates the president's bid to place new restrictions on voting ahead of the 2026 midterm elections, when control of Congress is at stake. The action was swiftly condemned by Democrats and voting rights groups, who said it interferes with state election administration and makes it harder for people to vote.

Trump's order requires the Department of Homeland Security to coordinate with the Social Security Administration to create lists of voting-age citizens who are residents of each state and transmit them to state voting officials at least 60 days before an election.

The U.S. Postal Service would then oversee mail-in ballots, with the order directing the agency to develop "uniform standards" for the ballots and preventing it from transmitting ballots of individuals who are not approved. The Postal Service would provide each state with a list of voters who are "enrolled" with the agency.



Trump

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Vandy poll finds U.S. is united in anxiety

Austin Hornbostel
Nashville Tennessean | USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

If there's one key takeaway from Vanderbilt University's latest Unity Poll, it might be this: Americans are feeling especially pessimistic about "politics as usual."

The feeling extends to topics like the economy and AI, too, according to a March 5 news release announcing the poll's results.

The national poll, conducted as part of the Vanderbilt Project on Unity and American Democracy, surveyed 1,032 U.S. adults between Feb. 20 and Feb. 23, asking questions largely focused on perceptions about the state of the country.

According to the release, those respondents were "strikingly united in their anxieties about where the country is headed," even across political party lines.

Here's a look at what they said.

U.S. optimism lags, and so does appetite for 'two-party gridlock'

The poll found that a broad bipartisan majority of 89% of respondents agreed that Democrats and Republicans "need to stop fighting and start working together."

"Americans are frustrated by the two-party gridlock and by the deep internal divisions among Republicans and among Democrats," the release reads. "An overwhelming 89% of Americans want politicians to stop fighting."

The poll finds U.S. optimism "incredibly low," with 73% of respondents saying they believe the Founding Fathers would not be proud of the country today and 66% in agreement that the country is not on the right track.

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