

## Special Use of Library Premises for Expression of Opinion

### TACOMA PUBLIC LIBRARY

#### Administrative Policy: #10.49.3

The existence of the public library is dependent upon a legal and social climate which supports the First Amendment right to free speech. Part of the Mission of the Tacoma Public Library is to provide individuals with the information necessary to participate in self-government. Therefore, it is the policy of the Library to make designated areas on Library premises available for the public expression of opinions and ideas where feasible.

This policy restricts solicitation activities and imposes reasonable time, place and manner restrictions on signature gathering, political activities and other activities or expressions of free speech in accordance with State law and to the extent necessary to prevent unreasonable interference with patrons' enjoyment of the library.

RCW 42.17.130 generally prohibits libraries from becoming part of the election process itself. In particular, the law forbids the use of public office or agency facilities in campaigns. This means that the Tacoma Public Library cannot:

- Have petitions in library buildings for the public to come in and sign (violates RCW 42.17.130).
- Have petitions in library buildings for the public to take and seek signatures.
- Have petition signature gatherers seeking signatures inside library buildings.

The terms for public use of library premises are:

- The Tacoma Public Library allows petition signature gatherers and electioneers to solicit signatures on library property, but not within the library building.
- Solicitation on library premises outside the library building is allowed as long as they do not interfere with the public's access to, entry into or exit from the building. Petition signature gatherers and electioneers may be outside the library building only and may not be in the foyer, lobby or interior of the facility. Petition signature gatherers and electioneers may also utilize outdoor walkways and plaza areas and adjacent sidewalks as long as they do not interfere with traffic. The judgment shall be made by the person in charge of the branch.

- Furniture (tables, etc.) may be utilized if it does not act as a barrier to free access to the Library, create a safety hazard, and/or incorrectly imply that it is a Library activity. judgement shall be made by the person in charge of the branch.
- Each participant shall wear an organizational or name badge that clearly identifies him or her as other than a Library employee. It shall be clear that the activity is not affiliated with or sponsored by the Tacoma Public Library.
- If more than one advocate or advocacy group wants to conduct a survey or distribute information, it is up to the person in charge of the branch to provide an orderly process for allowing fair access to the premises without disrupting service.
- Signs regarding this activity may not be posted in or on the building.

The provision of library premises for the public expression of opinion does not constitute Library endorsement of the opinions or ideas of those individuals and organizations using the space.

The Library Director, or his/her representative, is responsible for the administration of this policy, for establishing administrative procedures for its implementation and for making the policy available for the public at each branch and via the Library's web site.