

FINANCIAL IMPACT TO IOWA CITIES & TAXPAYERS

Concern

Proposed library legislation, House File 2309 (HF2309), will pose severe financial risks to Iowa cities and the State of Iowa which will be ultimately funded by Iowa taxpayers.

Not a Hypothetical

Iowa Senate File 496 Ongoing Litigation

- In 2023, Iowa lawmakers passed SF496, the Iowa School Book Ban Law.
- Multiple judges initially blocked enforcement due to First Amendment violations.
- A lawsuit was filed against the State of Iowa by the "Big 5" book publishing companies, literary groups, and authors.
- As of February 2026, litigation against this law continues in federal court.

Similar Idaho Legislation & Litigation

- In 2024, Idaho lawmakers passed HB710 which offers vague and overbroad language that threatens to censor library books and materials.
- A lawsuit was filed against the State of Idaho by the "Big 5" book publishers, the Authors Guild, Donnelly Public Library, librarians, teachers, students, and parents.
- As of February 2026, litigation is ongoing.

Anticipated City Costs

Costs for Iowa Cities



Legal Defense & Litigation

Legal expenses to ensure compliance and defend staff/policies would create long-term uncertainty and sustained budget pressure.



Insurance Premium Increases

Even if claims are insured, premiums and deductibles rise system-wide after increased legal risk.



Compliance

Staff labor costs to ensure compliance and handle increased complaints also reduces regular library service capacity.



Library building reconfiguration

Cost to change physical library to ensure children don't have access to library materials.



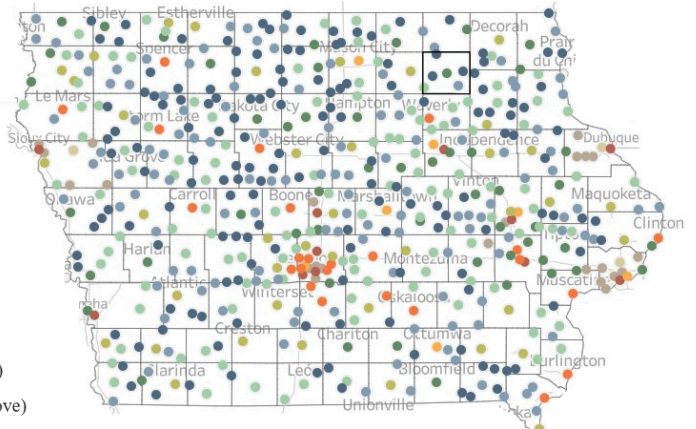
Staff Turnover/Recruitment

Staff retention costs increase with turnover, reduced applicant pool.

544 Libraries
Serve
3.2M Iowans

Population Size Code

- A (Under 500)
- B (500-999)
- C (1,000-2,499)
- D (2,500-4,999)
- E (5,000-9,999)
- F (10,000-24,999)
- G (25,000-49,999)
- H (50,000 and above)



Category	Costs	Consequences of Removing the Obscenity Exemption from Iowa Code 728.7
Legal Fees & Litigation	\$50,000-\$500,000+ per year per city/library	Local libraries will require ongoing legal counsel to ensure compliance and to respond to challenges or complaints regarding library materials. Continued legal guidance will be necessary for developing and revising library policies. These legal costs divert funding from other essential city services such as police, fire, and road maintenance, and costs are likely to be ongoing and unpredictable.
Insurance Premium Increases	5% - 25% annual premium hike	Increased liability risk would raise city insurance costs due to a higher likelihood and frequency of claims against libraries and staff. Over time, greater exposure to lawsuits typically leads to rising premiums and deductibles. In some cases, libraries may lose access to affordable insurance coverage altogether.
Library Compliance & Physical Reconfiguration	\$5,000-\$100,000+ per library	Policy changes, expanded complaint systems, and facility reconfiguration will be costly and will reduce traditional library services for all residents. Library staff will require additional training to implement new compliance procedures. Library facilities will need to be redesigned to restrict access for children and teens and to create segregated adult-only areas. Installing physical barriers, signage, and relabeling materials will be time-consuming and expensive. Libraries may resort to adults-only due to costs.
Staff Turnover & HR Costs	\$10,000-\$50,000+ per library position	Many library staff may leave their positions due to increased risk of litigation, rising complaints, and legal uncertainty. Staff workloads will shift toward new compliance procedures, challenge processing, and documentation requirements. Higher turnover rates will increase the costs of recruiting, onboarding, and training new employees.

*Figures estimated based on current library legislation litigation in other states including TX, AR, TN, UT, and ID.