

For Immediate Release

Longmont Group Highlights Civil Liberties Threat; Will Stage “Subversive Book Checkout” at Library

Longmont Citizens for Justice and Democracy will stage a “Subversive Book Checkout” at the **Longmont Public Library on Saturday, March 15, 2003**. This event is intended to highlight the threat to constitutional rights posed by the USA Patriot Act and subsequent administrative orders issued in its wake.

The USA Patriot Act, passed with minimal debate after the September 11 terrorist attacks, gives the FBI unprecedented power to obtain patron and customer records from libraries and bookstores, as well as records from schools, medical providers, businesses, and credit reporting agencies. There is no requirement to inform those whose records have been taken; indeed, a librarian or bookseller who reveals the fact may be subject to criminal prosecution.

New administrative regulations, announced by Attorney General John Ashcroft in late May of last year, allow FBI surveillance of religious, civic, and political groups. No evidence (or even suspicion) of criminal activity is required prior to undertaking surveillance. The FBI strictures against domestic spying instituted in response to the invasive COINTELPRO actions of the 50's, 60's and 70's have been largely eviscerated.

Longmont Citizens for Justice and Democracy believes that these actions are a direct assault on the First and Fourth Amendment guarantees of the U.S. Constitution. We feel they will have a chilling effect on scholarship and public discourse. In our view, there is no essential difference between banning a book outright versus making people afraid to read, buy or discuss the book.

To draw attention to this rollback of basic constitutional protections, LCJD is sponsoring a “Subversive Book Checkout” event at the Longmont Public Library. **The public is invited to join us at 6th Avenue and Main St. at noon on Saturday, March 15. There will be short march to the library, followed by an outdoor rally. Participants will then be invited to check out books that highlight freedom and democracy issues.** To minimize the impact on library staff, and to provide “safety in numbers”, we will be “recycling” a short list of books. The book list is available on the LCJD website, www.LongmontCitizens.org.

Longmont Citizens for Justice and Democracy is a grassroots citizen group whose members believe “Democracy is in the Doing”. We sponsor lectures, films, discussion groups and demonstrations. (Join us Monday, March 17th at 7:00 pm for a talk and video about the Domestic Security Enhancement Act (Patriot Act II), Longmont Library, 3rd and Kimbark, west meeting rooms.) For more information, please visit our web site.

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USA Patriot Act background: Bill of Rights Defense Committee, www.bordc.org.

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