

Venango County Library Tax Referendum

You may have seen yard signs around asking you to “Vote Yes for Libraries”. Beware! Today’s libraries are NOT yesterday’s libraries!! On the November 4th ballot, voters in Venango County will be given the option to pay more in taxes! Here’s the referendum question you’ll be voting on: ***Should the County of Venango support the Oil Region Library Association to operate as a county library by establishing a Special Library Tax at the rate of .25 mills on all taxable real estate within the county (\$12.50 per assessed value of \$50,000)?***

The Oil Region Library Association (ORLA) has been around for ten years, putting the three public libraries in the county under its umbrella. The executive director is Daniel Flaherty and its office is in the Oil City Library. By the way: Have you been to the Oil City Library during June “Pride Month” and seen their display of LGBTQ books? If this referendum passes in November, your tax dollars will be supporting such displays!

They expect to raise over \$400,000 from YOU the Taxpayer! Here are some things they are NOT telling you:

If the referendum passes, the Library Code allows them to raise the Library Tax without taxpayer approval.

In 2023 Executive Director Daniel Flaherty was paid \$75,595 and ORLA brought in \$1,004,593 through contributions, grants, gifts, membership dues. They had investment income of over \$71,000. See below for fourteen additional reasons NOT to support this referendum, as well as a list of board members!

Why to Oppose the Proposed Library Referendum

- 1.) The Oil Region Library Association (ORLA) wants **a Special Library Tax of .25 mill on ALL taxable real estate in the county.** They give the example of \$12.50 per assessed value of \$50,000; estimated total income from new tax is over \$400,000. Can Venango County residents afford to fork over \$400,000 plus in new property taxes annually?
- 2.) Where will the money go? According to ORLA’s 2023 990 tax form: Executive Director Daniel Flaherty was paid \$75,595 and “Other Salaries and Wages” amounted to \$354,577. 2023 revenue is listed as \$1,119,152. According to the 2023 990, Total Assets are \$4.03 million. In

2022 Flaherty made \$51,448 and “Other Salaries and Wages” amounted to \$343,391. 2022 total revenue was \$1,081,025.

- 3.) With smart phones, e-books, the internet, etc., how many people use the library anymore?
- 4.) Are the book, periodical and magazine collections increasing or decreasing in the libraries?
- 5.) If you have an internet connection or know someone who does, you have the ability to access most of what the libraries offer.
- 6.) The library allows people to borrow, at no charge, tools. This negatively impacts local rental businesses. Why should taxpayer dollars be spent to allow a “non-profit” entity to compete with local businesses?
- 7.) Go to <https://oilregionlibraries.org> and click on “Youth” on the top bar; type in “LGBTQ” or “gay” in the search bar and see what you get!
- 8.) Have you been to the Oil City Library during June “Gay Pride Month”? Have you checked out the Young Adult section in the other libraries? How many LGBTQ books are there? You’ll be surprised!
- 9.) With libraries going the way they are, will one of the county libraries be holding a Drag Queen Story Hour next year?
- 10.) Do we want our tax dollars going to support the above?
- 11.) The county libraries are members of the American Library Association (ALA), which believes all materials should be available to everyone no matter what the age. The ALA vigorously opposes any effort to remove sexualized materials targeting children from the library.
- 12.) From a May 19, 2025 *Derrick* article: **If the referendum passes, ORLA will be looking to take in about \$450,000 in additional revenue from the library tax**, with another \$165,000 becoming available from the state due to the new partnership with the county government. **The proposed funding would establish an annual floor that current and future county commissioners wouldn’t be able to go below, though Flaherty said they could raise the tax if they felt it was needed.**
- 13.) Pages 14 and 15 of this Department of Community and Economic Development article gives you more info about the Library Code here <https://dced.pa.gov/download/referendum-handbook/?wpdmdl=58456&refresh=663547a4993101714767780> and it says: **“Once approved, governing bodies may increase the tax rate without submitting the question to the voters.”**
- 14.) Under the ORLA “Tools, Kits, Games and More” it says, “We tend to focus on one-time-use, expensive or risky items to offset costs to our community members.” Why are taxpayers paying for this??

Current Oil Region Library Association board (August 2025) – per their website:

Jessica Struthers, Chair	Deb Rosen, Treasurer	Judy Etzel	Mallory Spence
Laura Jones, Vice Chair	Sarah Margherio, Secretary	Bonnie Summers	Sarah Merkel