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ACLU Challenges Oroville Union HS District's Net Filter on Gay Info

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Sacramento Bee
Cathy Locke

The American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California announced Wednesday that it has notified the Oroville Union High School District that its Internet-filtering software has been improperly configured to block access to Web content geared toward the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities.

The ACLU has sent demand letters to school districts across the country as part of the organization's national "Don't Filter Me" initiative, which seeks to combat illegal censorship of LGBT educational information on public school computers.

Elizabeth Gill, attorney for the ACLU of Northern California, said the letter to the Oroville district was prompted by a complaint from Melina Zancanella, a junior at Oroville High School and president of its gay-straight alliance club.

When Zancanella tried to look up ways the club could help stop teen suicide, she found the websites were blocked.

Oran Roberts, superintendent of the Oroville Union High School District, was unavailable for comment Wednesday.

Gill said school officials often are unaware that software provided by filtering companies frequently censor LGBT-related materials that are not sexually explicit or pornographic.

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