

# Save Our Escondido Library Coalition

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Lawsuit filed against Escondido City Council for Outsourcing Library**

*Local consumer advocate files suit to stop contract with LS&S*

**Escondido** – Today, consumer champion Alan Geraci, who successfully fought big banks on behalf of hundreds of homeowners during the foreclosure crisis, filed a lawsuit against the City of Escondido for entering into an improper outsourcing agreement for the Escondido Public Library.

Geraci and local library activists announced the lawsuit in front of the Escondido Public Library, downtown, along with fifty library supporters who were on hand to support the legal challenge.

“The City of Escondido has broken the law. By forcing privatization of our library, the City Council failed the community, failed the library workers, and failed to follow the law,” said consumer attorney Alan Geraci.

The suit claims that the contract the city entered into with Library Systems and Services of Maryland (LS&S) was improper and must be rescinded. The legal action was brought on behalf of Roy and Mary Garrett of Escondido, 46-year residents and library supporters, who spoke at the event.

Roy Garrett said, “The council majority destroyed our branch library in the face of virtually universal local opposition. Now the city manager, the mayor and City Council majority have broken faith with all the Escondido residents, taxpayers, volunteers, library employees and donors who created and nurtured this heart of our city, our 100 year old public library, and turned it into a profit center for a corporation. Neither the law nor the citizens of Escondido can allow this to happen without challenge.”

Save Our Escondido Library Coalition spokesperson Debbie Resler told the crowd, “Our community has been consistent and clear; we do not want a private corporation with a bad reputation ruining our library. Thank you Roy and Mary Garrett and Alan Geraci for standing up for the people of Escondido to help us legally stop this unconscionable action on the part of the Mayor and the City Council majority.”

After the news conference announcing the lawsuit, library activists marched to City Hall to serve the lawsuit to the City, Mayor, and City Council.

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The contract with LS&S was adopted by Mayor Sam Abed and Councilmembers Masson, Gallo, and Morasco, with Councilmember Olga Diaz voting no, after a long and bitter hearing on October 18, 2017. The outsourcing was opposed by over 4,000 petition signers, the American Library Association, and the Escondido Library Board of Trustees.

Since the decision to move forward with the LS&S outsourcing, many experienced librarians have quit in protest.

John Donel, a senior librarian who submitted his resignation last week, effective December 2, spoke at the news conference. “As a lifelong public employee who has always worked to meet the needs of the public, I cannot in good conscience continue to work for a city government that has dishonored what it means to be a public servant,” Donel said.

Donel continued, “The decision to allow a poor-quality company with non-transparent management and financial practices, like Library Systems & Services (LS&S), to make a profit from a free public library, has already had a negative impact on library staff and services, as nearly 100 years of professional staff experience has been lost since the process of privatization began.”

Brenda Townsend, a life-long resident of Escondido and frequent library user said, “We will continue to fight as long and as hard as we have to, to make this Mayor and Council accountable to the people of Escondido and give us back our library for the public good.”

The Save Our Escondido Library will continue their efforts to save the Escondido library and help other communities protect themselves and their libraries from LS&S.

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***About Save Our Escondido Library Coalition:*** The coalition was formed by local Escondido community groups and residents in response to the City of Escondido’s move to consider outsourcing of the Escondido Public Library. The coalition seeks to educate themselves and the public and to provide a conduit for Escondido residents to voice their concerns.