Censorship and Freedom of Expression

The county library board is meeting to adopt policies regarding restricting patron access to social networking websites in the public libraries following legislation proposed by the U.S. House of Representatives, known as the “Deleting Online Predators Act.” The goal of the bill is to prohibit schools and libraries from allowing minors to access social networking sites or to require schools and libraries to create restrictions on the use of these sites. The bill requires institutions to disable those restrictions for adult use and for educational purposes by a minor with adult supervision. The bill has not yet been passed by Congress and the library board must decide how to proceed with a policy in the interim.

Representatives from two groups will present their suggested policies and give arguments for them to the county library board.

Pro Group: You are composed of individuals who are in favor of an increased amount of restriction regarding social networking access in public libraries. Your group represents parents and others who fear that allowing children unrestricted access to social networking sites will expose them to an increased possibility of predators contacting children via these sites.

Con Group: You are composed of individuals who oppose restrictions on Internet access in public libraries on the grounds that it is unnecessary, and limiting access to a wide range of websites may be detrimental to educational and other legitimate purposes.

Jury Group: You are composed of members of the county library board who must decide on a policy for patron access to social networking websites in the county libraries.