



May 21, 2012

John R. Read, Chief
Litigation III Section
U.S. Department of Justice
450 5th St. NW, Ste. 4000
Washington, DC 20530

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LITIGATION III, ANTITRUST DIV.
U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE

Dear Mr. Read,

I am writing as the Executive Director of the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association, a non-profit trade association of retail bookstores in five Northwest states, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Alaska. We represent about 150 retail bookstores in those five states, providing them with an annual conference, annual Book Awards, on-going literacy promotions, free speech advocacy, industry education, and other membership tools. I am writing on behalf of our Board of Directors and our members to urge you to reject the proposed settlement between the Justice Department and three publishers on the issue of eBook pricing.

Our members are dedicated, professional booksellers, and most have been in the business for more than twenty years. They continue in the industry, despite massive and, from our perspective, unfair pricing competition, because of their love of books and their desire to share books with their communities. The single greatest threat to their maintaining a reasonable presence in the industry is Amazon and its selling of books in all formats below cost. This overwhelming discounting of books is driving all other retail competition out of business, and, if allowed to continue, will decimate the retail bookselling world and leave one massive corporate juggernaut in control of all book distribution in the country. If and when that occurs, our society will lose the diversity of books and the access to free speech that we have come to expect.

In the lawsuit brought against those publishers who dared to experiment with "agency plan" sales of their eBooks and in the proposed settlement of that case, the government is taking sides with the dominant power-grabbing corporation, Amazon, against the independent presses and retail booksellers who would maintain a free and open distribution of books in the United States. Such a stand is antithetical to the values of free commerce and a competitive marketplace. We urge you to reject the settlement and allow publishers to sell their books on an agency plan, if they so choose.

Sincerely,

Thom Chambliss

and the entire PNBA Board of Directors: Karla Nelson, Tegan Tigani, Brad Smith, Jamil Zaidi, Maggie Freitag, Leigh Ann Giles, Becky Milner, Courtney Payne, and Susan Richmond.

Thom Chambliss
Executive Director

Larry West
Executive Assistant

Brian Juenemann
Marketing Director