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Memorandum Supplemental Packet

TO: LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD
FROM: RACHEL TUSSEY, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK II
DATE: SEPTEMBER 20, 2022
SUBJECT: SUPPLEMENTAL PACKET

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ALAAmericanLibraryAssociation

Fund Libraries

Tell Congress to invest in libraries. #FUNDLIBRARIES



Hello Kate!

As we shared last month, the Senate Appropriations Committee's proposed budget for fiscal year 2023 includes the first dedicated federal funding for library facilities in 26 years! Now Congress is set to consider this funding and **we need you to tell Congress to #FundLibraries.**

Take Action Now

For more than two years, ALA advocates across the country have urged Congress to #BuildLibraries. Your work made sure Senators received this message -- the Senate's fiscal year 2023 budget proposal includes \$20 million to modernize libraries nationwide in addition to funding for LSTA. This victory shows the power of longer-term policy engagement – but the fight isn't over.

While the Senate Appropriations bill includes this crucial funding, the House has not signed on. Congress may act on these bills as early as this month. We need to do all we can now to ensure that the House bill includes this much-needed funding. **Will you reach out to your representatives today and urge them to support this historic library facilities funding?**

Take Action Now

Thank you for all you do for libraries!

ALA Public Policy & Advocacy Team

Library Infographics

Requested by Chair Kate Finn

THIS LIBRARY CELEBRATES

BANNED BOOKS WEEK

September 18–24, 2022

ALA American Library Association
ALA.ORG/BBOOKS

The graphic features a background of open books. A rainbow-colored banner at the top contains the text 'THIS LIBRARY CELEBRATES'. Below it, the words 'BANNED BOOKS WEEK' are written in large, bold, black letters. The dates 'September 18–24, 2022' are at the bottom left. The ALA logo and website are at the bottom right. Several colorful birds are flying across the scene.



(/news/)

FReadom Fighters receives AASL Intellectual Freedom Award

For Immediate Release

Tue, 04/12/2022

Contact:

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CHICAGO – FReadom Fighters, started by a group of Texas school librarians, Becky Calzada, Carolyn Foote, and Nancy Jo Lambert, is the recipient of the 2022 American Association of School Librarians' (AASL) Intellectual Freedom Award. Established in 1982 and sponsored by ProQuest, the award is given for upholding the principles of intellectual freedom as set forth by AASL and ALA.

"In the face of what can oftentimes seem an uphill battle the FReadom Fighters have created a public awareness that highlights the positive impact of intellectual freedom and celebrates school libraries and school librarians," says committee chair Christy James. "The committee was impressed by the immediate and innovative response, with an uplifting and supportive approach that will continue to grow as an ongoing initiative to support not just school librarians but students and parents."

The school librarian FReadom Fighters organized a secret Twitter takeover on November 4, 2021 with the #Txlege hashtag. They highlighted positive books and invited families, authors, librarians, teens, and parents to join. The goal was to uplift librarians, highlight the power of children's and YA literature, and highlight the role of school librarians in material selection so that the public and legislature would be more informed in the face of mounting book challenges.

Since then, the FReadom Fighters have created a Twitter account (twitter.com/FReadomFighters) with more than 6,000 global followers, a uniform hashtag used across the country (#FReadom), a website (www.freadom.us (<http://www.freadom.us>)), and continue to create weekly actions to raise awareness of intellectual freedom and to defend the right to access to information for school library users.

The Texas Library Association shared their appreciation for the FReadom Fighters, "recognizing that it was critical to counter negative messages from elected officials with positive messages. These leaders have created a sense of community among school librarians, who often feel very alone in their jobs. Their work to uphold the principles of intellectual freedom in the face of enormous challenges has been incredibly important and inspiring, especially to the school library community. They are very deserving of this prestigious award," said TLA executive director, Shirley Robinson, CAE.


Gloria Gonzales-Dholakia, Vice President of the Board of Trustees for Leander, ISD, said, "FReadom Fighters steadfast commitment to protecting every reader's constitutional right to read is not only inspiring but

is making a significant contribution to educating students and parents about the precious influences of school libraries.”

“It’s wonderful for the fight for intellectual freedom to be framed in the love of reading and sharing common experiences found in the pages of books that embrace the diverse communities we serve,” said AASL President Jennisen Lucas. “Giving students and parents an opportunity to join our fight is uplifting and reinforcing of the important work of school librarians.”

The AASL award winners will be recognized during the 2023 AASL National Conference taking place October 19-21 in Tampa, Florida.

The American Association of School Librarians, www.aasl.org (<http://www.aasl.org>), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), empowers leaders to transform teaching and learning.

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Teens fight for the right to read with ‘banned-book clubs’ and lawsuits

By [Hannah Natanson](#)
May 3, 2022 at 6:00 a.m. EDT

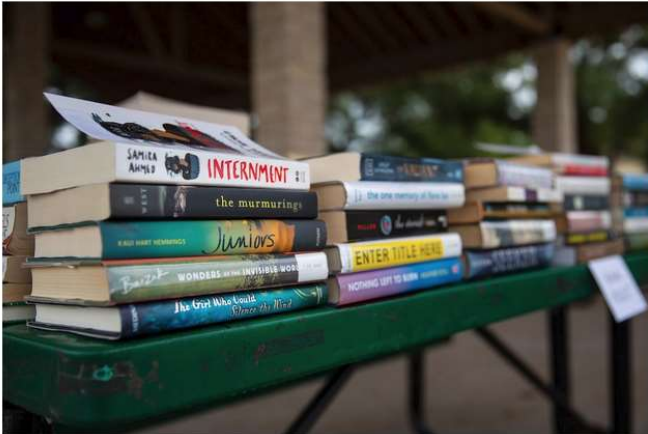


Ella Scott, left, and Alyssa Hoy, co-founders of the Vandegrift High School Banned Book Club, speak at a rally for the right to read. (Montinique Monroe/For The Washington Post)

AUSTIN — On a hot, dusty Wednesday afternoon, 10 girls gathered in their high school library to talk about a book the adults said they weren’t allowed to read.

The teens came complaining about tests and chattering about TikTok dances — but they quieted when Ella Scott, the 16-year-old co-founder and co-president of the Vandegrift High School Banned Book Club, cleared her throat.

Ella looked at her notes for the club’s 14th meeting, convened to review I.W. Gregorio’s “[None of the Above](#).” The book tells the story of Kristin, a high school student who discovers she is intersex, [a condition in which people are born with atypical combinations of chromosomes, hormones, gonads or genitals](#). In December, the [Leander Independent School District](#) had banned the novel from classroom libraries and from use in high school student book clubs — along with 10 other books — because it features “sensitive topics” and “concepts of sex and anatomy.”



Books on display at the “Spring into FReadom” rally held in Cedar Park, Tex., on April 20. (Montinique Monroe for The Washington Post)



From left, Jaea Rivera, Isabela Rotondaro and Nicole Miltonberger chat before a late April meeting of the Vandegrift High School Banned Book Club. (Montinique Monroe for The Washington Post)

“So the main thing for this one,” Ella said, tucking her blond hair behind her ears, “was strong language and sexual references.”

Kendall Howe, 16, pulled up a discussion question on her computer screen and read aloud: “Throughout this novel, Kristin struggles to accept her identity outside of the gender binary. How does Kristin’s self-acceptance change throughout the novel?”

Several people tried to speak at once.

The teens in Texas — who would spend the next hour sharing how they never knew people could be intersex, and wondering what other aspects of the world will remain hidden if grown-ups keep banning books — are part of a swelling movement of students who are gathering all across the country to fight, in ways large and small, for the right to read.

In Missouri, two students [filed a lawsuit](#) against their district for yanking eight books from school libraries. In New York, a group of students from the Brooklyn Public Library’s Intellectual Freedom Teen Council are meeting weekly on Zoom to coordinate national resistance to the censorship of school books. And in Pennsylvania, students held daily protests outside their high school last fall until administrators reversed their decision to ban [more than 300 books, films and articles](#), the majority by Black and Latino authors.

“I didn’t want little kids growing up in the district to feel as if African Americans don’t matter because our books are not on the shelves,” said 17-year-old Christina Ellis, who is Black and helped lead the Pennsylvania demonstrations. “There’s no room to grow if you dismiss our history.”



A poster at a rally for the right to read held in Cedar Park, Tex., in late April. (Montinique Monroe for The Washington Post)

Challenges to books in America this academic year [reached the highest level since the American Library Association \(ALA\) started tracking the issue](#) decades ago. PEN America, a nonprofit that advocates for freedom of expression, found that 1,586 books have been yanked from libraries or classrooms in the past nine months, [with the majority disappearing secretly, outside proper procedures](#). By comparison, 2018, 2019 and 2020 each saw about 300 book challenges or bans, according to an ALA tally. Most of the books targeted feature LGBTQ or Black characters or address LGBTQ themes, race or racism.

And the book removals are just one piece in a larger, Republican-led campaign to reshape public education in America. Conservative lawmakers in 17 states have passed laws restricting what teachers can say about race, racism and sexism, [according to an Education Week tracker](#), and legislators [in at least seven states](#) — including Florida, Kansas and Tennessee — have passed or are considering laws that limit instruction on gender identity and sexuality.

“They’re creating a very small image of what people are supposed to look like in the world.”

— *Cate Marshburn*

At the local level, adults so far seem little disposed to grant teens’ requests for greater access to books. The reversal in Pennsylvania seems to be one of the only instances to date of a school district backtracking publicly in response to students, according to a Washington Post analysis.

The Texas book club members knew these odds. They knew that their district, Leander ISD, had so far refused to return a single one of the 11 books to classrooms. Leander schools

spokeswoman Crestina Hardie said Friday that the 11 books remain unavailable in classroom libraries or for use in book clubs, although she noted that physical copies of nine of the 11 are on offer in high school campus libraries.

The teens knew that the adults might not be listening that afternoon in April. But they spoke up anyway.

“For people who are intersex ... taking away that story is taking away their story,” said Alyssa Hoy, 16, the book club’s other co-founder.

Cate Marshburn shook her head, blond ponytail swinging behind her. “They’re creating a very small image,” the 16-year-old said, “of what people are supposed to look like in the world.”



A stack of banned books sits on Alyssa Hoy’s dresser in Austin. (Montinique Monroe for The Washington Post)

‘It’s stuff people need to hear’

Almost exactly two weeks earlier, Christina Ellis had risen before dawn on a Thursday and driven two hours from her home in Pennsylvania to Washington to testify before Congress.

She was scheduled to speak before the House Oversight subcommittee on civil rights and civil liberties, which was holding a hearing on “[Book Bans and Academic Censorship](#).” Committee members had read about Ellis’s success fighting book bans in the [Central York School District](#). Now, wearing a black-and-white patterned blazer, the high school senior settled herself at a wooden desk, shuffled her sheaf of notes and faced the row of representatives.



Christina Ellis, 17, spoke about her success fighting book bans in Pennsylvania at a House Oversight Committee hearing on April 7. (Video: Oversight Committee)

She told the lawmakers about the time her elementary school teacher played a documentary on slavery, causing the other children to turn and stare at her, the only Black child in the room. She told them how she avoided bringing her family’s Caribbean food to lunch, to forestall snarky comments. She told them how she straightened her hair throughout grade school, hoping White students might feel less tempted to reach out and touch without permission.

“Books that highlight our differences and teach others to respect diversity are crucial,” [Ellis said](#). “This would decrease bullying and judgmental stares.”

In Missouri, meanwhile, the American Civil Liberties Union [filed a lawsuit in February](#) on behalf of two student plaintiffs seeking to reverse book bans in the [Wentzville School District](#). School officials had decided in January to remove eight books from school libraries, including Toni Morrison’s “[The Bluest Eye](#),” [because of concerns over obscenity](#) and mature language.

The ACLU charges in its lawsuit that district officials are infringing on students’ “First Amendment right to be free from official conduct that was intended to suppress the ideas and viewpoints expressed in the Banned Books.” The lawsuit notes that many of the banned books are authored by or feature people of color and LGBTQ individuals, and “engage their readers with a diversity of ideas and minority viewpoints.”

District spokeswoman Brynne Cramer said in a statement that officials took away the eight titles “in compliance with district policy,” which calls for materials to be “removed when a formal challenge is received.”

The students involved in the lawsuit filed anonymously for fear of harassment in their community. Some residents have labeled opponents of book bans “groomers” and child abusers. One student spoke with The Post on the condition of anonymity. The student, who is Black, called “The Bluest Eye” a book filled with “stuff people need to hear.”

“The more we hide this stuff from people, keep it down and muffled, nothing is going to change.”

— *High school senior*

He recalled seeing the n-word scrawled on school bathroom walls, uttered in school hallways and hissed at him on the basketball court. He said this will never stop if other students — his district is more than 80 percent White — do not learn to see African Americans as people just like themselves.

“The more we hide this stuff from people, keep it down and muffled, nothing is going to change,” he said.

The Wentzville district [voted in late February](#) to return “The Bluest Eye” to shelves. School spokeswoman Cramer said three other titles have also been returned, two of those because the people who challenged them decided to rescind their complaints. Four books are still unavailable in school libraries as they undergo reviews, Cramer said, including the [much-challenged](#) “[Lawn Boy](#),” a novel by Jonathan Evison that features an encounter between two male students, and George M. Johnson’s “[All Boys Aren’t Blue](#),” a memoir about growing up Black and queer.



Raisa Islam, 16, sits outside the Brooklyn Public Library. (Anisha Hassan)

Hope for change is what inspired 16-year-old Raisa Islam, a South Asian and Muslim high school junior in New York City, to join the Brooklyn Public Library’s Intellectual Freedom Teen Council.

The council, formed last year, meets once a week on a video call to plan ways students can combat book removals. Early ideas include a newsletter offering a list of tips and resources, Raisa said. The library is also [offering a free digital membership](#), granting access to its 350,000 e-books, to any American age 13 to 21.

**If only we allow intellectual freedom,
So the children of today won’t
Become broken adults of tomorrow.**

Excerpt from “Unjustifiable Treatment,” a poem by Raisa Islam.

Raisa said she will never forget how reading Angie Thomas’s “The Hate U Give” helped her process an incident in which a White man, biking past her on the street, yelled out “F--- you.” Raisa, at the time 14, was walking home wearing a hijab.

By reading Thomas’s book, Raisa said, she came to believe that the man harassed her because he was scared of what he did not understand — the religion of Islam.

If the man had grown up reading about all kinds of people and faiths, she believes, he wouldn’t have been so afraid.



Ella Scott and Alyssa Hoy met in Ella's driveway to plan out their idea for a banned-book club. (Montinique Monroe for The Washington Post)

‘We request that you reconsider’

In Texas, Ella Scott and Alyssa Hoy learned of the Leander school district’s decision to limit students’ access to almost two dozen books from Alyssa’s mother, a Leander teacher.

It was spring of last year. The two girls, best friends who live next door to each other, immediately rushed to their favorite meeting spot — Ella’s driveway — to figure out what was happening and what they should do next. Scrolling online, they realized some of the books had been challenged by a group of parents and residents who complained of inappropriate content.

In response, the district [had started reviewing 19 titles](#), in the meantime forbidding their use in classroom libraries and in high school student book clubs. The blacklisted books included a graphic novel version of Margaret Atwood’s “[The Handmaid’s Tale](#),” which Ella loves; Ashley Hope Pérez’s “[Out of Darkness](#),” a historical novel that chronicles a love affair between Mexican American and African American teens; and Carmen Maria Machado’s “[In the Dream House](#),” a memoir that explores an abusive same-sex relationship.

Alyssa had always been a bookworm, while Ella fell in love with books during the pandemic, when there was little to do except read. But both girls knew immediately: They could not let the book bans go unopposed.

“We were trying to figure out, were they talking to students about this? And they really weren’t,” Alyssa said. “So we felt we should offer something — not advice, but an opinion.”

In a statement, Leander spokeswoman Hardie noted that students “have the opportunity” to join something called the Community Curriculum Advisory Committee, a group of parents, teachers, principals, students and community members “who gather with the primary function to advise on the written, taught and tested curriculum [and] related instructional resources.”



Alyssa Hoy, left, and Ella Scott have been best friends for as long as either can remember. (Montinique Monroe for The Washington Post)

The idea for a club devoted to banned books emerged over the next several weeks, born of more driveway huddle sessions and text chats. The girls asked a highly sociable friend to recruit other students and, after clearing the 10-member threshold for a club, filled out a form online to officially establish theirs. Ella and Alyssa also made [an Instagram account](#). Just before school started, after much fruitless brainstorming, Ella conceded she couldn't think of a more creative name — so they stuck with “VHS Banned Book Club.”

In late August, the club held its first meeting. Although the girls were apprehensive, no teachers or administrators raised any roadblocks, allowing them to gather without fuss in the library. They began working their way through the list of challenged texts while school officials continued with their reviews. In December, the district [formally barred 11 books](#) from classroom libraries and student book clubs, while returning some texts and keeping others for ongoing reviews.

The decision strengthened the girls' determination to keep reading.

Under the bans, though, the school could not provide any of the challenged or forbidden titles. Instead, the girls posted public Amazon wish lists for books, which were quickly purchased online by donors who had seen [media coverage of the group](#).



Ella Scott, left, and Alyssa Hoy pack up after a book club meeting in the Vandegrift High School library. (Montinique Monroe for The Washington Post)



From left, Banned Book Club members Angela Gutierrez, 16, Jaea Rivera, 15, and Isabela Rotondaro, 16, laugh during an April meeting. (Montinique Monroe for The Washington Post)

Over the course of the school year, the book club has grown to 16 members and worked its way through seven books. Meetings are held once every two weeks during study break, and each takes about an hour. At the close, the girls — it's still all girls, although members hope that boys will join soon — draft a statement, which they post to Instagram, naming the book they've read, explaining why it was banned and sharing why they believe it should be returned to shelves.

“I’m learning something from these books. ... Books are how you learn life lessons.”

— *Isabela Rotondaro*

The proposed statement for Gregorio's “None of the Above” spurred some debate at the meeting in late April.

Several people proposed arguing that the text is necessary because it teaches about the little-known medical condition of being intersex.

“Most of these, I’m learning something from these books,” said 16-year-old Isabela Rotondaro. “Books are how you learn life lessons.”

But Adriana Castillo-Estep, 16, cautioned against going too far: Nobody is “going to want to read an informational pamphlet,” she said.

The [final statement](#) filled five paragraphs and six slides on Instagram. It praised the novel for explaining “the facts behind the condition” of being intersex in a way that is accessible to teenagers “such as ourselves.” It also noted that the book was written by a doctor.

“The removal of this book perpetuates the idea that being intersex or outside of the gender binary is somehow wrong or shameful,” the girls wrote. “As students, we request that you reconsider.”



By [Hannah Natanson](#)

Hannah Natanson is a Washington Post reporter covering education and K-12 schools in Virginia.

[Twitter](#)