

Resolution Reaffirming ALA's commitment to Intellectual Freedom and issuing a Call to Action

Whereas *Intellectual Freedom and Privacy and Access* are both core values of the American Library Association;

Whereas there has been an unprecedented and alarming increase in the number of book challenges across the United States, with the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom recording 223 unique titles challenged in 2020, 1,858 in 2021, 2,571 in 2022, and 4,240 in 2023— a 1,900% increase over four years— and many of these challenges come as part of an organized campaign by extremist organizations;

Whereas the overwhelming majority of these challenges are towards titles that represent the views and voices of historically marginalized groups (including those in the LGBTQ+ communities and those who are BIPOC), which increases threats to the safety of individuals in these groups, especially when those individuals are public employees;

Whereas this extraordinary attack on titles representing the viewpoints of historically marginalized groups has led publishers, organizations, and governmental entities to self-censor materials that represent those viewpoints rather than face attacks themselves, pulling titles that might be seen as controversial from sales, shelves, and programs;

Whereas library materials have been removed from access by children and teens based on a singular viewpoint of moral or religious beliefs; which constrains the intellectual freedom of minors, undermines the ability of parents and guardians to determine what is appropriate for their children, and constitutes censorship that is as serious as removing materials from the shelves completely;

Whereas there have been unprecedented threats made to library workers, including legislation criminalizing library work, legislation preventing libraries from participating in the American Library Association or other professional organizations for necessary support and defense from attacks, false characterization of library workers as “groomers,” organized efforts by local chapters of extremist organizations to leverage culture war issues to defund libraries, wrongful termination of employment of library workers who identify with historically marginalized groups, threats of bombs and other violence at libraries, and other efforts to make library work untenable for many in the profession;

Whereas there have been efforts to legislate the prohibition of public funds to obtain services or memberships from the American Library Association, including to receive grant funding, support services, professional development, and graduate school accreditations;

Whereas the profession of librarianship is itself under attack, through efforts to deprofessionalize library employees by slashing the compensation for highly experienced and

trained librarians, and legislation or regulatory changes removing ALA standards from official requirements for library work on the state and local level;

Whereas social media, artificial intelligence, and other technologies have been weaponized by extremist groups and other bad actors to deliberately spread dis- and mis-information; preventing the free flow of reliable information, the open exchange of ideas, the ability of information professionals to do their jobs, and threatening the principles of intellectual freedom;

Whereas teachers and library workers in many states have had the ability to exercise professional judgment in their collection development and provision of reading materials to students questioned; and

Whereas there is a chilling effect on libraries, library workers, and library users in jurisdictions and states where courts and legislative bodies actively consider codifying restrictions that prevent library workers from exercising their professional discretion and expertise; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members:

1. condemns, in the strongest possible terms, any and all efforts to remove materials from library shelves, and efforts to prevent minors from accessing developmentally-relevant library materials;
2. condemns, in the strongest possible terms, threats to the physical safety of library workers;
3. decries the removal and undermining of professional standards by state and local governments and efforts to restrict membership in a legally established professional trade association;
4. strongly urges publishers and booksellers to resist censorship or segregation of the materials they make available in school book fairs;
5. urges elected officials and others to acknowledge the importance of libraries in a functioning democracy, oppose all efforts to restrict access to information, and prioritize the safety of library workers and other public servants in this challenging environment;
6. expresses concern about the manipulation of social media, artificial intelligence, and other technologies that result in the restriction of intellectual freedom and access to information;
7. acknowledges the tireless work of library workers, supportive elected officials, advocates, and library supporters for their efforts to uphold the First Amendment;
8. thanks booksellers, organizational partners, community groups, and library advocates for their active participation in public meetings and public discourse, contributing to Amicus Briefs and other advocacy efforts in the courts, and their efforts to lobby elected officials to protect the right to read; and
9. calls upon concerned people everywhere to petition their elected officials to protect, preserve, and defend the First Amendment and the Right of Free People to Read Freely.

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