

# RESPONDING TO BANS AND CHALLENGES

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# THE CURRENT SITUATION

ALA reported 330 book challenges from September–November of 2021, which is more than double the number from all 2020 (156).

This trend has continued into 2022 and mainly targets books written by and about:

- People of color
- Indigenous people
- LGBTQIA people

HB 322, 327, AND 616

# HB 322

If a teacher decides to discuss any “current events or widely debated and currently controversial issues of public policy or social affairs” they must do so “from diverse and contending perspectives”. It also prevents them from “teaching, advocating, or promoting divisive concepts”.

Teachers who violate this can be investigated, though what constitutes a violation and what the consequences would be are vague.

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# HB 327

Expands the tenets of HB 322 to state colleges and universities, local governments, and all state agencies and departments.

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# HB 616

Prohibits curriculum about gender identity and sexuality in K-3 classrooms.

For grades 4-12, prohibits providing curriculum on sexual orientation or gender identity that is not “age or developmentally appropriate.”

The bill does not say who would set these standards.

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STEPS TO TAKE NOW:  
BEFORE YOU RECEIVE  
A CHALLENGE

# KEEP YOURSELF INFORMED

ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom has a blog called Intellectual Freedom News that is regularly updated with news about book challenges and censorship attempts. Check in regularly so that you know which books in your collection are likely to be challenged and what kinds of challenges your colleagues are experiencing.

Office for Intellectual  
Freedom blog:

<https://www.oif.ala.org/oif/>

# Intellectual Freedom News 9/2/2022

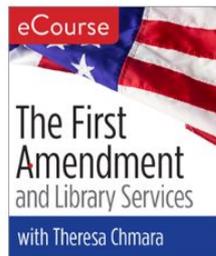
September 2, 2022 Eric Strohane Intellectual Freedom News

## Highlights

- Austin (TX) Council opposes book banning, adopts Freedom to Read resolution
- Conservatives join liberals in 'quiet and polite' Idaho protest to protect their library from book-banners | CNN
- E-Course on the First Amendment and Library Services Begins September 12 | OIF Blog

## Censorship

- City closes library to remove 'displays' | Huntsville Item (TX)
- Court dismisses lawsuit against books said to be 'obscene' for minors in Virginia Beach | 13 News Now (VA)
  - Judge thwarts Va. Republicans' effort to limit book sales at Barnes & Noble | Washington Post
  - 'Gender Queer' author 'relieved' after court rules book's sale can't be restricted in Virginia | Time
  - Virginia Beach School Board meeting gets heated on schoolbook material | 13News Now (VA)
- A Library Struck by Controversy That Began Over a Book It Didn't Own | Route 50
  - Armed Idaho locals show up to library board meetings to push ban of over 400 books | CNN
  - Conservatives join liberals in 'quiet and polite' Idaho protest to protect their library from book-banners | CNN
- Carroll schools deem parts of book by grandson of slave inappropriate for some students | Fort Worth Star-Telegram (TX)
  - A North Texas school district says a book chapter by its namesake about a lynching is not appropriate for some students | CNN
- An Oklahoma teacher gave her students access to banned books. Now she's under scrutiny | NPR
  - Oklahoma Wants to Revoke License of Teacher Who Shared 'Books Unbanned' QR Code | Vice
  - Brooklyn Public Library's "Books Unbanned" program aims to provide young people with access to censored literature | CBS News
- A Des Moines metro book ban update | Axios Des Moines (IA)
- Book ban battle. Dist. 99 students honored for fight to keep 'Gender Queer' on library shelves | My Suburban Life (IL)
- Fairfax County Public Library board sticks by materials selection policy | FFX.Now (VA)
- Utah schools are adopting new book-banning procedures | Axios Salt Lake City (UT)
- These teachers' book list was going to be restricted. Their students fought back | Education Week
- Area schools remove books under new law that is unlikely to be enforced | St. Louis Post-Dispatch (MO)
- Oklahoma state board affirms decision to downgrade accreditation for 2 school districts over violating law on race and gender teaching | CNN
- Norman Public Schools parent says former teacher 'should have criminal charges | KOKH (OK)
- Greenville HS students walkout over school's new policy on CRT books and propose LWFAA (TX)



Learn about First Amendment principles and library services beginning September 12

# MAKE NOISE

Write to your local representatives regarding HB 322, 327, and 616 (or similar bills for those not in Ohio). Use these links to find out exactly who you need to contact.

Not sure how to start or what to say? The Authors Guild website has templates for writing to your legislators.

Find your local school board members:

<https://xgsuperschool.org/school-board-lookup>

Find your legislators:

[https://openstates.org/find\\_your\\_legislator/](https://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/)

The Authors Guild website:

<https://www.authorsguild.org/industry-advocacy/join-us-to-stop-book-banning/?fbclid=IwAR0-EFTifhmT4fxA5jxBXE0pEMP0osrAXGSfo0aER5YLMbv9Md>

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# CREATE AN ADVOCACY ALLIANCE TOOL

Martha Hickson shared this resource in her article “What It’s Like to Be the Target of a Book Banning Effort”.

Know who your allies are in the event of a book challenge and have a list prepared for quick and easy contact purposes.

Martha Hickson’s Advocacy Alliance Tool:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1b58NzjYMFp083t-xFleXK0zfp7bUqmXXLCpni0LaDhA/edit>

# KNOW YOUR LIBRARY'S POLICIES

Review your collection development policy. Make sure it explains how and why certain books are chosen.

Review your materials reconsideration request form. If it seems out of date, consider updating it. Check out this sample from Fairfield County Public Schools for reference.

Know your library's chain of command and what is expected of you if you receive a challenge.

Fairfield County Public Schools' Request for Reconsideration of Library or Instructional Material.

<https://www.fcps.edu/sites/default/files/media/forms/is706.pdf>

WHAT TO DO WHEN  
YOU RECEIVE A  
CHALLENGE

# STAY CALM

Be understanding and placating, even if you disagree with everything they are saying. The goal is to prevent a scene, not bring them around to your views (which you are unlikely to do anyway).

Ryan Dowd has excellent trainings on diffusing situations, and if you are an Ohio librarian you get his trainings for free through the State Library.

Info about creating a Niche Academy account through the State Library and signing up for Ryan's trainings.

<https://library.ohio.gov/services-for-libraries/training-and-professional-development/ryan-dowd-libraries-homelessness-a-vailable-niche-academy/#About>

# OFFER SOLUTIONS

Give the patron a way to take action about their complaint if they want it. Offer to print them a copy of your collection development policy so they can see why certain materials are included, or a offer to print them a material reconsideration form to fill out.

If the situation warrants, get a manager (per your library's policy, you may have done this first).

Check out Angela Hursh's short video "Tips for Dealing with Angry Patrons when Your Library Reopens." Although the focus is on reopening post-pandemic, her tips also apply to dealing with patron complaints.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H11UbaaE9lk>

WHAT TO DO AFTER  
YOU RECEIVE A  
CHALLENGE

# REPORT IT

Report the challenge to your manager (if you have not done so already). Make sure to fill out documentation regarding the challenge.

Report the challenge to ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom. This could be any challenge, from materials, displays, programs, etc. Your personal information will be kept confidential.

Link to OIF's website to report a challenge:

<https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/report>

# REACH OUT

If you are concerned that the challenge will receive a lot of public attention, reach out to the allies on your advocacy alliance tool.

Reach out to your coworkers. Challenges can be stressful and demoralizing. Ask for and give support. Managers especially should show public support of their employees and their employees' decisions to purchase certain books.

Also check out The National Coalition Against Censorship's "Responding to Book Challenges: A Handbook for Educators

chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/<https://ncac.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/NCA-C-Educator-Handbook-Final-Web-PDF-11.17.2020.pdf>

# PRACTICE SELF CARE

The negative attention that Martha Hickson received, including hate-filled emails and an attempt to file a criminal complaint against her, caused her blood pressure to skyrocket, appetite loss, and insomnia. She had to temporarily stop work, begin medication for anxiety, and start seeing a therapist.

Talk to your manager and take whatever steps you need to preserve your physical and mental health during this time. Remember that time off to tend to your mental health counts as sick time.

Read Martha Hickson's article "What's It Like to Be the Target of a Book Banning Effort?"

<https://www.slj.com/story/from-the-breaking-point-to-fighting-a-new-school-librarian-martha-hickson-shares-her-story-of-battling-book-banning-censorship>

# LIBRARIES ARE NOT NEUTRAL

Article by R. David Lankes

<https://davidlankes.org/my-remarks-on-library-neutrality-for-the-la-midwinter-presidents-panel/?fbclid=IwAR3XJ0tcnFNn9s0dMhexzMDVELecwqbu8Rx6kIiojhZVJqLpVs-EuupdM8E>

"IF BOOKS DIDN'T HOLD  
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NOT TRY SO HARD TO  
CONTROL ACCESS TO THEM."

-LAURA SIMEON