



# **WELCOME**

## **BOOK BANNING: HOW TO FIGHT AGAINST IT**

**Presenters:**

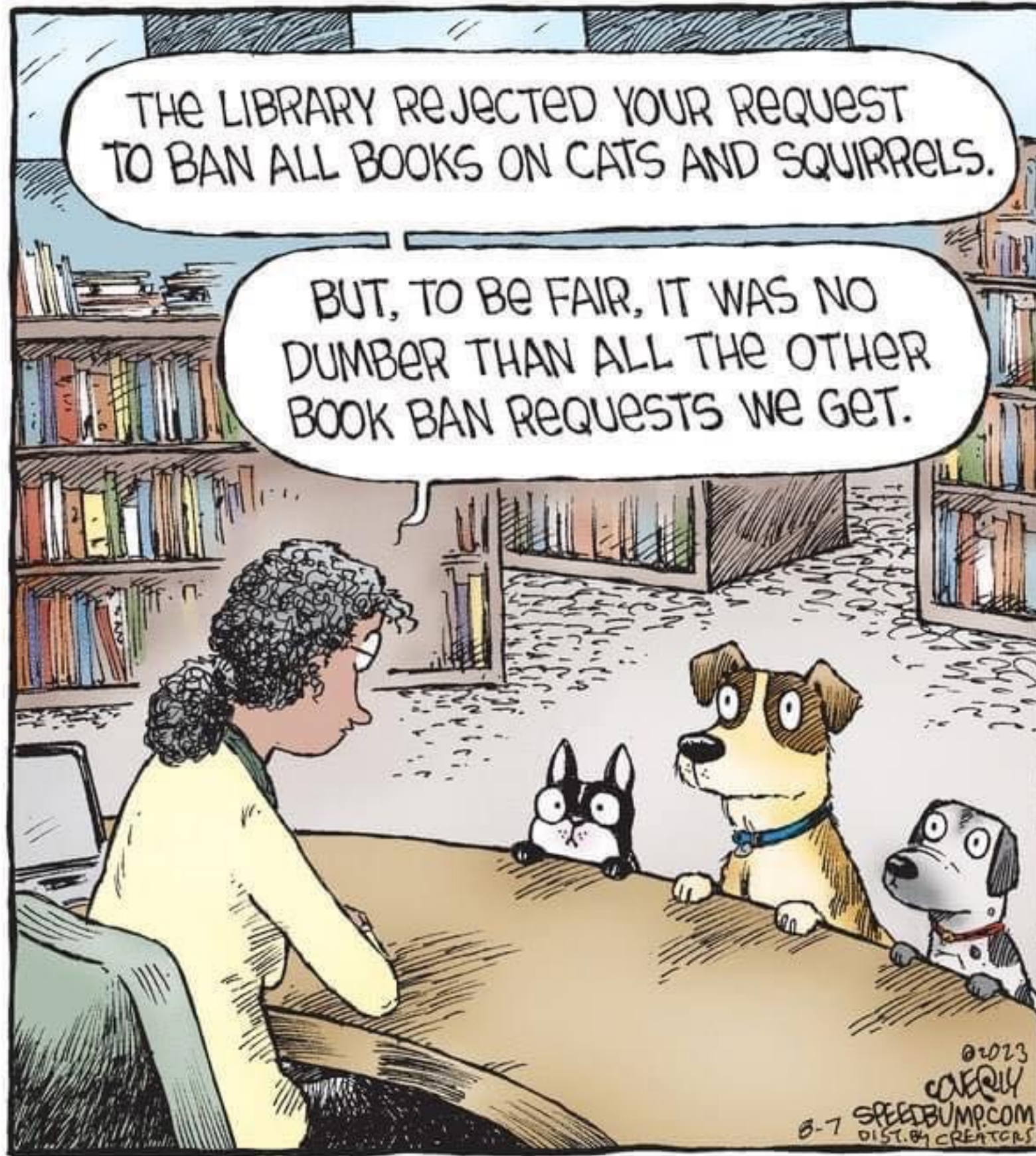
**Lynne Pierce, President, LWVGP**

**Sue Acton, Past President, LWVGP**

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THE LIBRARY REJECTED YOUR REQUEST  
TO BAN ALL BOOKS ON CATS AND SQUIRRELS.

BUT, TO BE FAIR, IT WAS NO  
DUMBER THAN ALL THE OTHER  
BOOK BAN REQUESTS WE GET.



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# TOPICS



- Scope of the problem
- How LWVGP developed our library positions
- How to develop your advocacy position
- Advocating for public and school libraries
- Resources
- Questions & Comments

# **BOOK CHALLENGES & BANS: SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM**



**Florida law led school district  
to pull 1,600 books —  
including dictionaries**

**Librarians fear new penalties, even prison, as activists  
challenge books**

**Michigan county eyed criminal ordinance  
for books. Librarians fought back**

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**Alabama library mistakenly adds children's book to "explicit"  
list because of author's name**

**This Arlington librarian is  
pushing back against book  
bans**

NATIONAL

**In Georgia, a bill to cut all ties with the American Library  
Association is advancing**

MARCH 1, 2024 · 10:04 AM ET

**Red states threaten librarians  
with prison — as blue states  
work to protect them**

**School district uses ChatGPT to  
help remove library books**

**Faced with new legislation, Iowa's Mason City Community School District asked ChatGPT if  
certain books 'contain a description or depiction of a sex act.'**

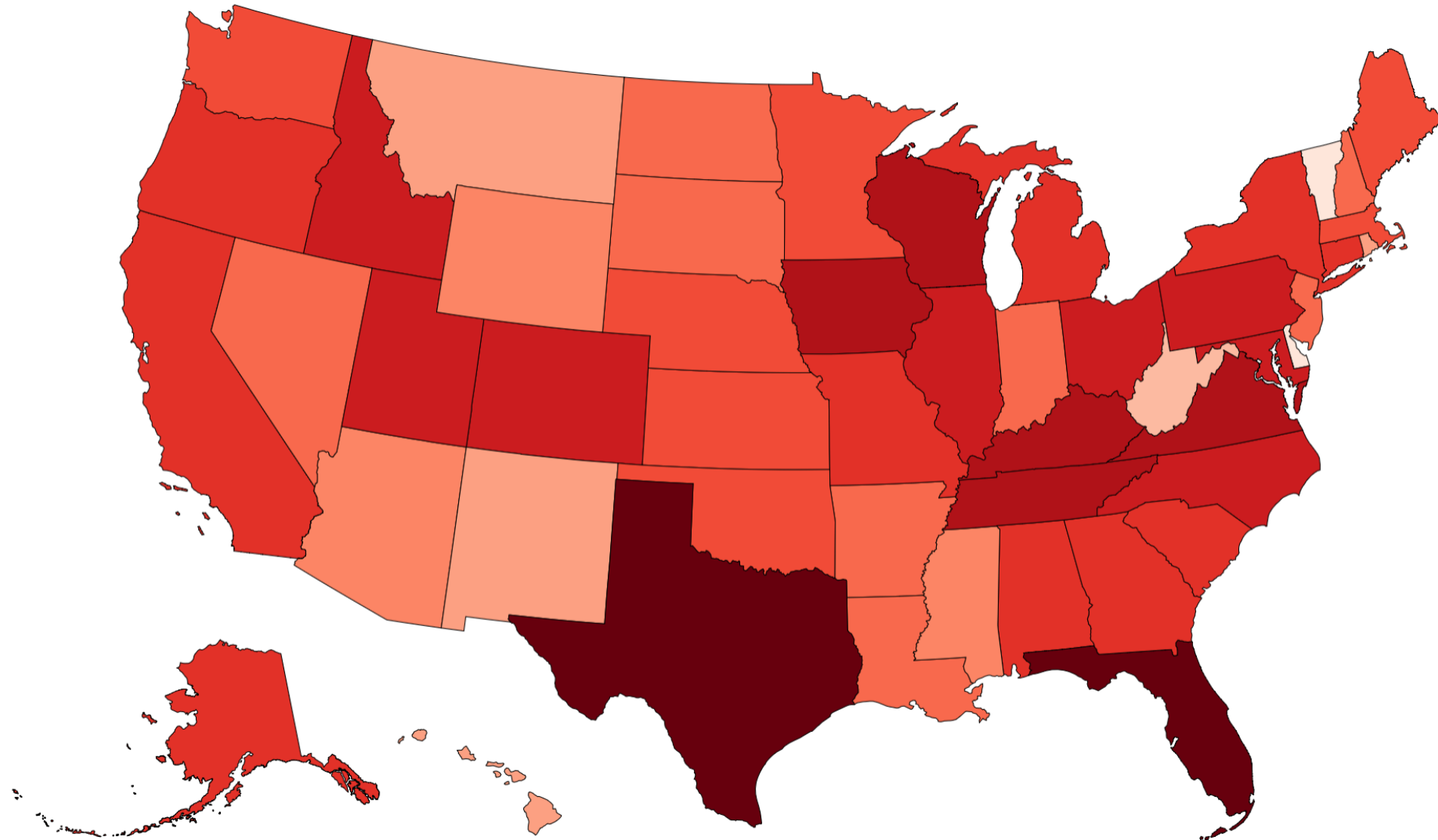
**Oklahoma enlists notorious right-  
wing zealot to guide school library  
policy**

**The lives upended by Florida's  
school book wars**

## Titles Challenged in Public Schools and Libraries During 2023

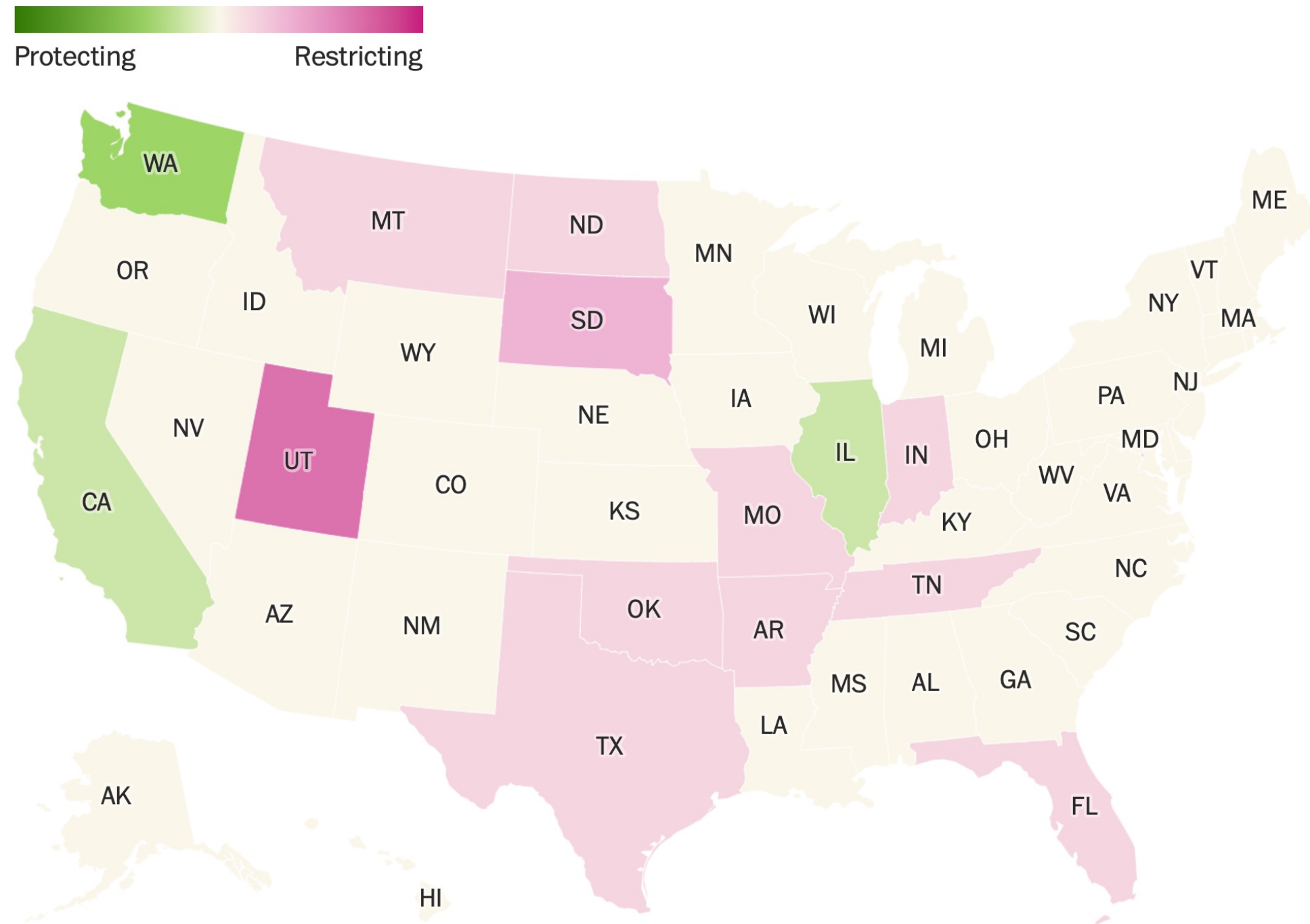
Attempts to censor books during this period: 938. Total titles challenged in those attempts: 9,021. Unique titles: 4,240.

A challenge may result in access being retained, restricted, or revoked at a school or public library.



Data compiled by: [American Library Association -- Office for Intellectual Freedom](#)

## States that have passed laws restricting or protecting school, public libraries in the past two years



Data as of March 2024. States in yellow have not passed any library laws since 2022.

Source: [EveryLibrary](#)

HANNAH NATANSON / THE WASHINGTON POST

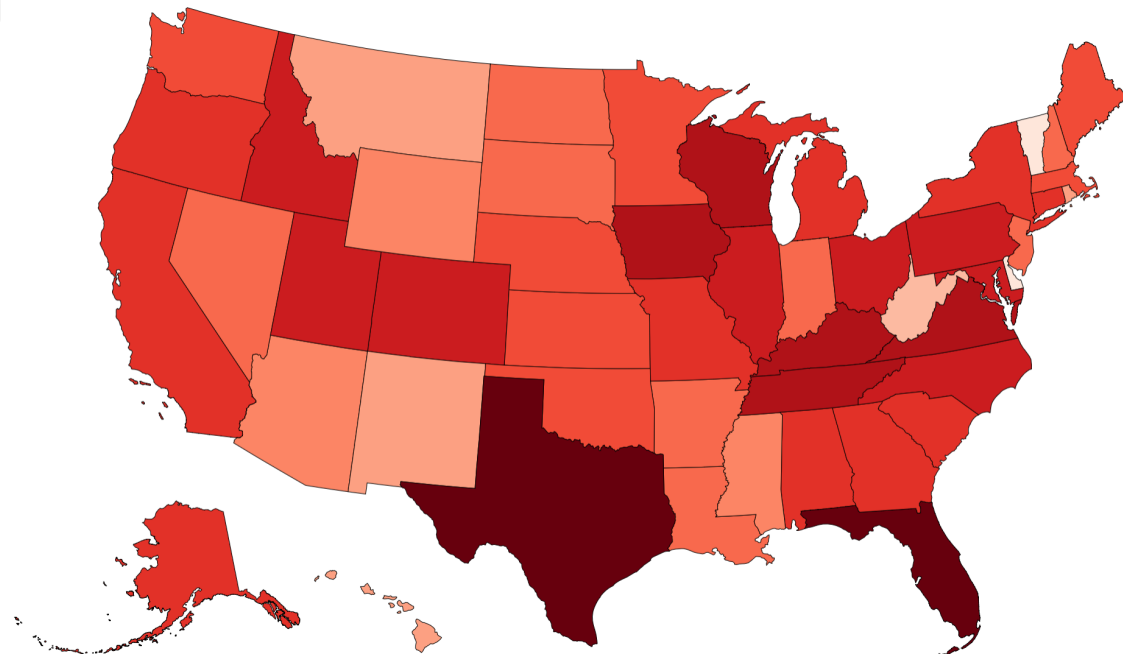
# Comparing Challenges & Legal Restrictions

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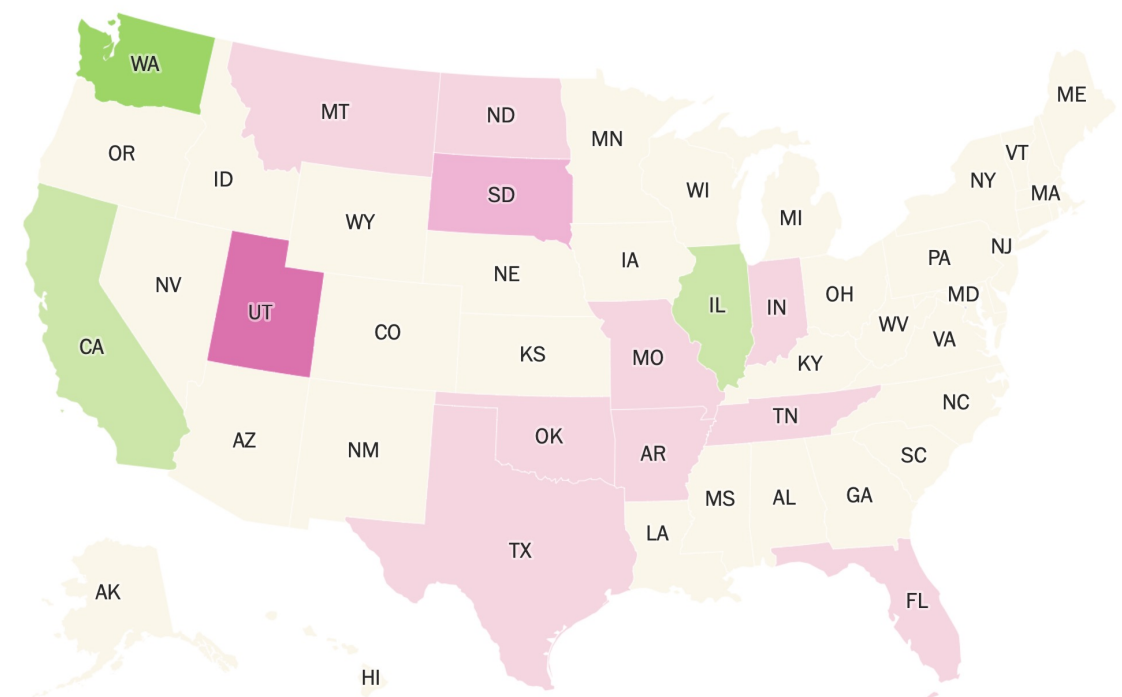
0 16 32 64 128 256 512



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Protecting Restricting



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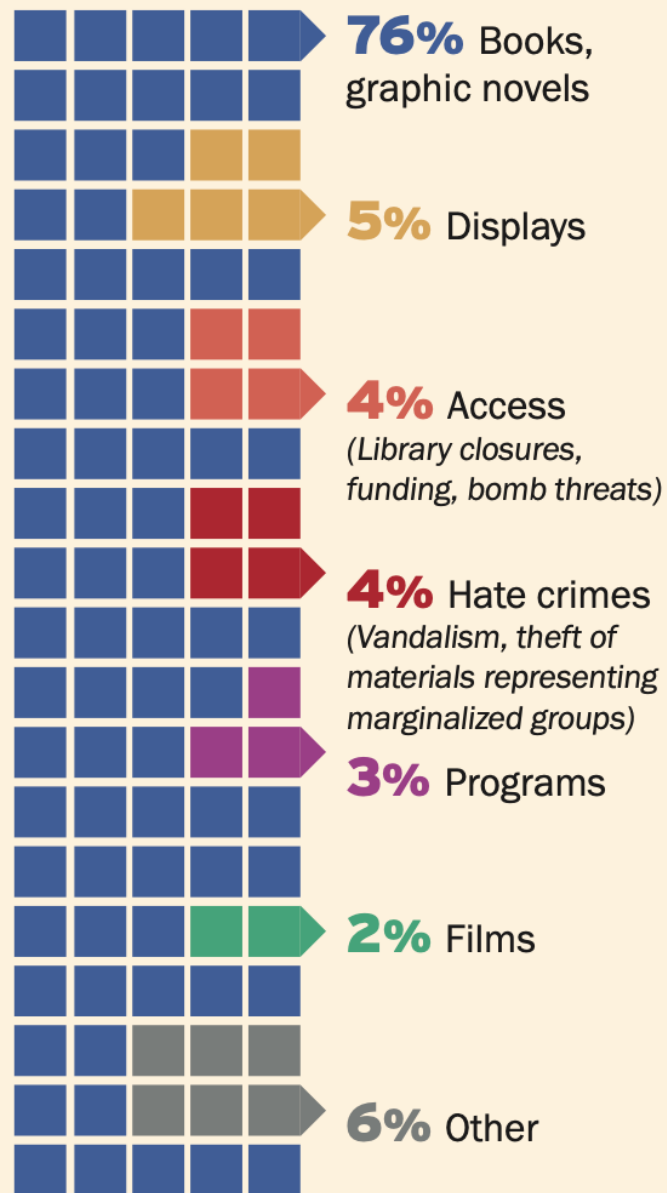
HANNAH NATANSON / THE WASHINGTON POST



# American Library Association, “Censorship by the Numbers”

## BOOKS AND BEYOND

ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom tracked **1,247 censorship attempts** in 2023. Here’s the breakdown:



- Challenges come from well-organized national groups that compile book lists.
- Lists distributed to their members.
- These groups utilize the lists to initiate challenges.
- Targets include books about:
  - history & biography
  - race
  - gender identity & sexuality
  - reproductive health

SOURCE: ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom  
<https://www.ala.org/bbooks/censorship-numbers>

# Where Do Challenges Take Place?

Pressure groups in 2023 focused on public libraries in addition to targeting school libraries. The number of titles targeted for censorship at public libraries increased by 92% over the previous year; school libraries saw an 11% increase.



**54%**

Public libraries



**39%**

School libraries



**5%**

Schools



**2%**

Higher education/other

*Statistics based on 1,247 cases with known locations.*

# National Organizations

## Mounting Book Challenges & Bans

- Moms For Liberty [www.momsforliberty.org](http://www.momsforliberty.org)
- LibertyCounsel [www.lc.org](http://www.lc.org)
- World Library Association [www.worldlibraryassociation.org](http://www.worldlibraryassociation.org)
- FEC United (Faith, Education, Commerce) [www.fecunited.com](http://www.fecunited.com)
- MassResistance - [www.massresistance.org](http://www.massresistance.org)
- US Parents Involved In Education - [www.uspie.org](http://www.uspie.org)
- No Left Turn In Education - [www.noleftturn.us](http://www.noleftturn.us)

Extremist groups targeting school boards & curriculum

- Proud Boys
- Three Percenters
- OathKeepers

SOURCES: Associated Press, *The Atlantic*, CNN, *The Hill*, *The New York Times*, PEN America, Southern Poverty Law Center, *The Washington Post*

# Tactics Used To Ban Books

## STATE LAWS & LOCAL ORDINANCES

Developed by national organizations, used by elected & appointed officials

- Prosecutions against librarians in AR, IN, MI, MO, OH, OK, TN, WY
- Use of obscenity laws to prosecute librarians and/or ban books in AK, AL, GA, ID, IN, LA, MO, MT, ND, OK, TN, TX, WV,
- Local & state laws stopping or limiting access to books in AZ, FL, IA, MT, OH, TN, TX, UT, VA
- Local & state libraries pressured to leave the ALA in AL, FL, GA, MO, MT, TX, WY
- Decreasing or eliminating public funding for libraries in MI, MO, TX, WY

# Public Meeting Tactics

Developed by national organizations, used by local affiliates

- “Blitz” strategies - moving on multiple policy areas at the same time
- Reduce or remove library funding
- Attempts to privatize library management
- Secrecy - closed door meetings
- Using “clappers” to pack public meetings with nonresidents & create impression that community support exists
- Copycat bans - sharing lists of books to challenge
- “Doxxing” & threats of bodily harm against librarians & library employees
- Book ban supporters appointed to local library and school boards
- Cherry-picking specific words out of context in a book
- Providing scripts to use at public meetings
- Create a problem, then sell a solution



# **PUSHBACK**

## **Against Book Challenges & Bans**

- FOIA requests filed; “Sunshine Law” violations acted on
- Federal Appeals Courts rule against some book bans
- Observer Corps attending school & library board meetings
- State legislation to protect access to books approved or pending in CA, CT, DE, IL, MD, MI, MN, NJ, VT
- Right to Read Act 2023 introduced in US House of Representatives
- In-person library use increasing
- Resident attendance at public meetings increasing
- Banned book clubs in high schools on the rise
- Parent groups filing lawsuits contesting censorship

# Does Your Community Support Book Bans ?

## Get the facts !

- Research local sources of threat. Are they residents or outsiders?
- Develop a position statement to advocate against censorship.
- Utilize your Observer Corps (OC) at local public library and school board meetings. Invite League board members, DEI and OC committee members to be part of the action team.
- Partner with local public and school libraries. Let them know LWV supports them.
- Make “Book Challenges” a local League program. Invite librarians to share their policies with the public.
- Speak up at public library & school board meetings.

# Voter Opinions - By The Numbers

- 83% support legislation to protect the right to read, regardless of party affiliation
- 70% majority said librarians capable & trustworthy
- 75% support the ability of young people's access to books
- 80% agreed that parents should set rules for their own children, but do not have the right to decide for other parents
- 77% agreed that local libraries should have a diverse collection of books

**HOW LWVGP  
DEVELOPED OUR  
PUBLIC & SCHOOL  
LIBRARY POSITIONS**





# **What LWVGP Did**

## **Local League Action 2022**

- 1. DEI Committee noticed FaceBook group pushing for book bans**
- 2. Alerted Board of Directors**
- 3. Two ad hoc committees formed to study issue at public & school libraries**
- 4. Observer Corps alerted to watch for pertinent agenda items**
- 5. Issue researched & position statements written**
- 6. Each library position submitted to membership for approval**

# LWVGP's Public Library Advocacy Position

## Public libraries:

- Central importance to community
- Support First Amendment rights

## Library standards & governance:

- Library staff operates within ALA standards
- Librarians may act without political interference
- Library Trustees representative of community
- Trustees selected to allow community involvement
- Open public governance records
- Operate on sound fiscal plan

# LWVGP's School Library Advocacy Position

- Promote intellectual freedom
- Enable children to learn critical thinking skills
- Minors have First Amendment rights
- Students should have equal and equitable access
- Only parents can restrict what their own children read
- No parent has right to restrict what another child reads
- Library staff operates within ALA standards
- Written policy & procedures for receiving parental concerns
- Teachers choose student resources without political interference

# **LWVGP Takes It Statewide**

## **State League Action 2023**

- 1. LWVGP researched how to bring to state convention**
- 2. Submitted to state League Board of Directors**
- 3. Approved for state convention agenda for concurrence**
- 4. Proposed at state convention, May 2023**
- 5. Delegates unanimously concurred & adopted position**

# **Library Position In Action !!**

**May 2023 - Three days after adoption,  
LWV Marquette stops book bans at Peter  
White Public Library.**

**November 2023, Patmos Public Library - Funding  
restored & closure averted. Descriptive stickers  
added to books - enough to quiet challengers.**

**December 2023, Herrick Community Library - League  
library position highlighted at community meeting -  
book challenges must be in writing; no successful  
challenges to date.**

**March 2024 - LWVGP invited to address  
Michigan Library Association Advocacy Day**



# HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR ADVOCACY POSITION ON PUBLIC & SCHOOL LIBRARY BOOK BANS

**IT'S BETTER TO HAVE  
YOUR NOSE IN A BOOK**



**THAN IN SOMEONE  
ELSE'S BUSINESS.**

# Does your local League have a position on book challenges, bans or censorship ?

		STATE	
LOCAL	Library Position ?	YES	NO
	YES	A	B
	NO	A	C

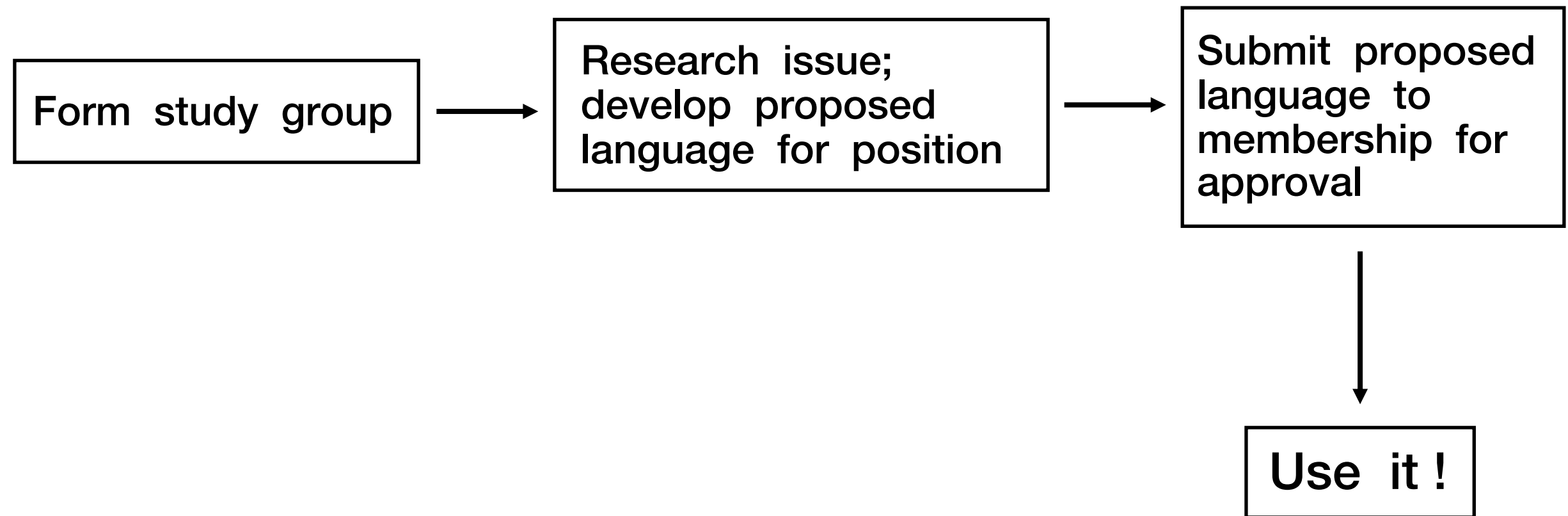
A. Connect with your library or school library & advocate now.

B. Connect locally (A) & use your position to advocate for change at the state level.

C. You have some work to do at the local or state League level.

# No Public Library Position

## Developing a New Advocacy Position - State or Local Leagues



# League Lingo

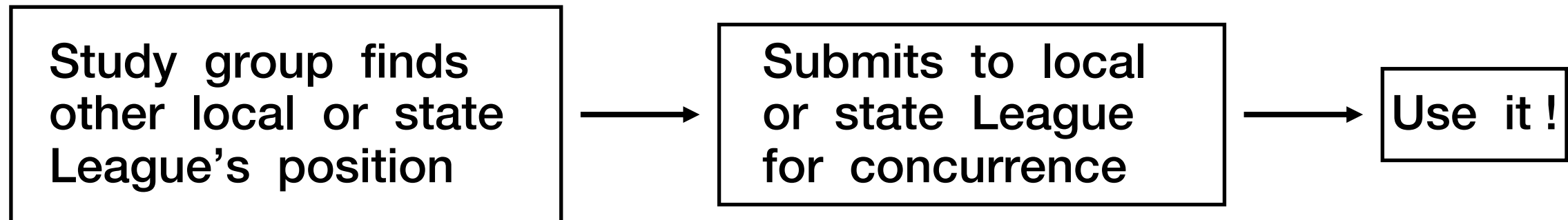
**Concurrence:** Agreement by League members with a position on an issue reached by a small group of members or by another League.

- “Another League”: any local or state League
- Adoption of position wording must be verbatim
- Can your League use concurrence ? Check your local & state League Bylaws



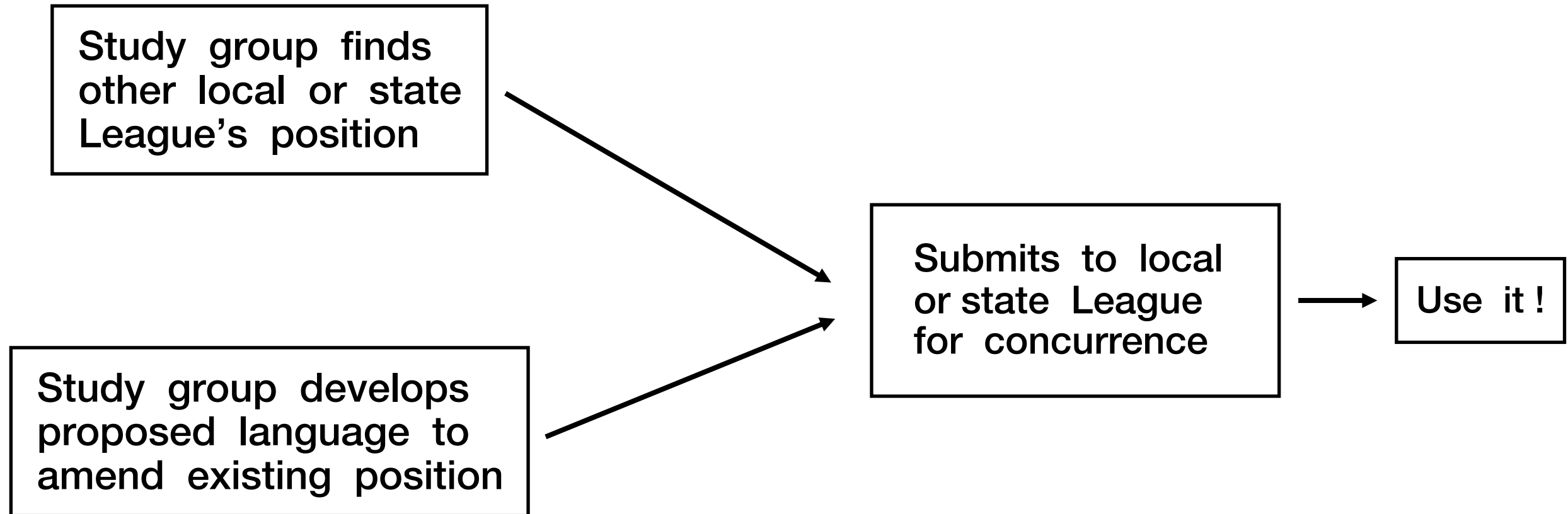
# No Public Library Position

Use concurrence to adopt a position  
State or Local Leagues



# Leagues with a Library Advocacy Position

Amend existing position to include book bans



# **ADVOCATING FOR PUBLIC & SCHOOL LIBRARIES**

# Working together so this never happens!



# PUT THE POWER OF LEAGUE ACTION TO WORK

- Utilize Observer Corps members at all public meetings, especially public library & school board meetings.
- Meet with your library director and staff. Let them know LWV supports public libraries.
- Show up! Stand up! Speak out!

# How To Use Your League's Public Library Position

- Testimony by League leaders at public meetings
- Form coalition groups
- Letters to editor
- Town hall discussions
- Candidate forum questions
- Voter education programs
- League website & social media
- Newsletter articles
- Local community events

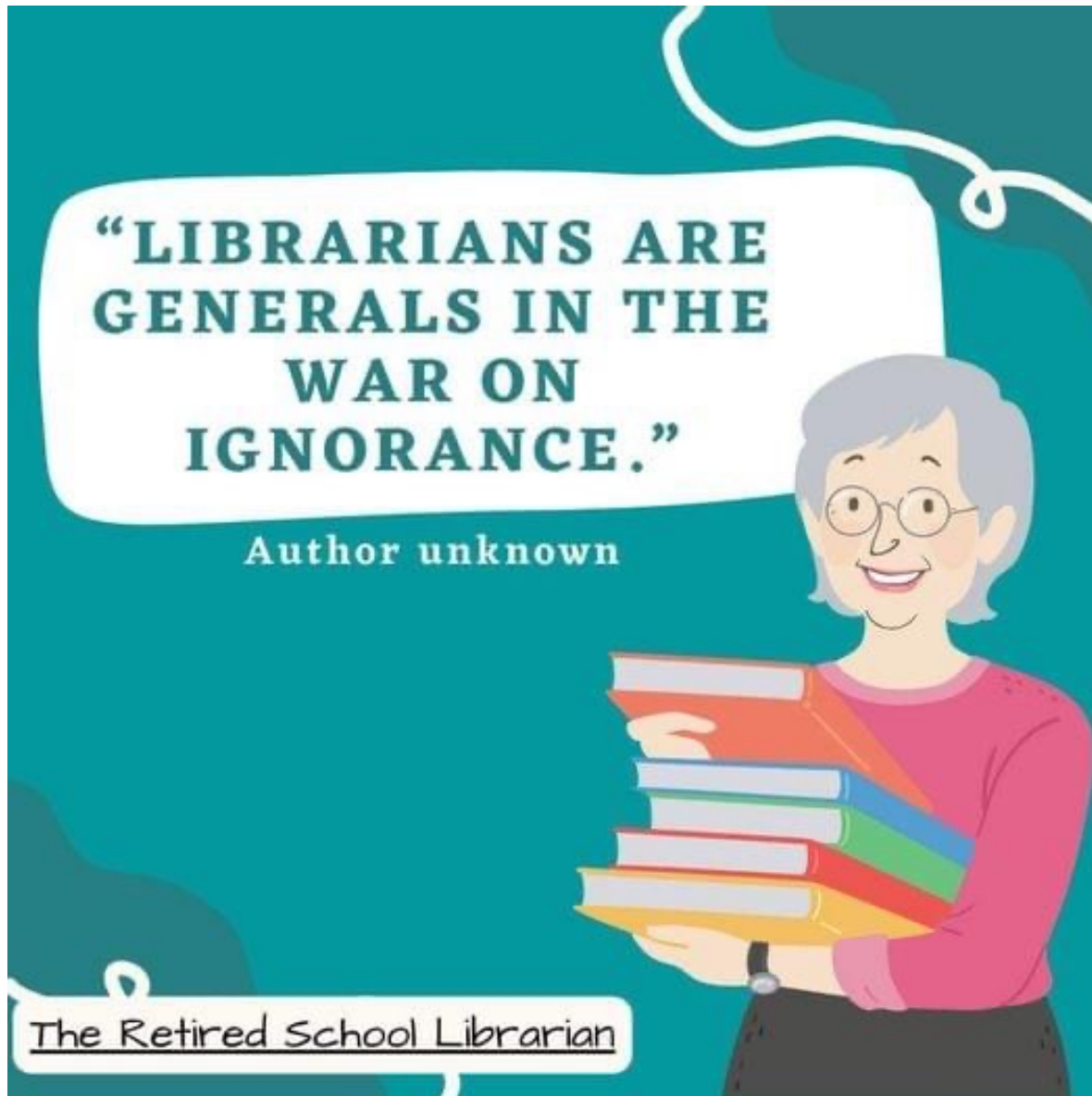


# CELEBRATE BANNED BOOKS WEEK

## PLAN A COMMUNITY PROGRAM



# Individual Support For Your Public Library



- Get a library card and use it
- Attend events at your library
- Talk to your librarians
- Talk to your friends
- Spend time in your library
- Look into Friends of the Library groups
- Make donations
- Check out volunteer opportunities
- Utilize social media



# IMPORTANT !!!



## REPORT BOOK CHALLENGES AND BANS !

American Library Association

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

National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC)

<https://ncac.org/report-censorship>

PEN America

<https://pen.org/issue/book-bans/>

# RESOURCES

# League of Women Voters Resources

## National

*Impact On Issues: 2022 - 2024*

[www.lwv.org/impact-issues](http://www.lwv.org/impact-issues)

*Observing Your Government  
In Action: Protecting Your  
Right To Know*

<https://www.lwv.org/league-management/advocacy/observing-your-government-action>

## State and Local Leagues

- Communicate with each other !
- Bylaws
- Position statements & studies
- Newsletters
- Blog posts

# More Resources

**American Library Association  
(ALA)**

[ala.org](http://ala.org)

**National Coalition Against  
Censorship (NCAC)**

<https://ncac.org>

**PEN America**

[pen.org](http://pen.org)



# QUESTIONS & COMMENTS



“[T]he public library is not to be mistaken for simply an arm of the state. By virtue of its mission to provide the citizenry with access to a wide array of information, viewpoints, and content, the public library is decidedly not the state’s creature; it is the people’s. It is the purpose of the First Amendment to preserve an uninhibited marketplace of ideas in which truth will ultimately prevail.... It is the right of the public to receive suitable access to social, political, esthetic, moral, and other ideas and experiences which is crucial here.”

— Judge Arthur Brooks, Memorandum Opinion and Order,  
*Fayetteville Public Library, et al. v. Crawford County, Arkansas*,  
July 29, 2023 Case Number 5:23-cv-05086 ●



**Thank you !**

[www.lwvgrossepointe.org](http://www.lwvgrossepointe.org)

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