



February 28, 2023

Iowa Library Association Statement on Information Access and Intellectual Freedom

Iowa Library Association calls on Iowans to remember our historic values for broad informational access and intellectual freedom and to continue to lean into the work we do together to promote literacy, learning, and free inquiry. ILA urges Iowans to support their local board members and commissioners in their efforts to safeguard free speech. ILA implores Iowans to tell their elected officials that they trust the representational stewardship provided by library workers through essential library services. ILA asks Iowans to stand united against book bans by utilizing their libraries for their educational, social, and entertainment goals.

Iowa Library Association calls on its membership, partners, advocates, and all concerned with the future of free people reading freely to exercise their right to read, to access information, and to demand the right of Iowans to govern themselves through local control of library governance.

Make your representatives aware of your concerns about proposed legislation to:

- require students to obtain written parental consent to check out a book that has been removed from any school district in Iowa.
- allow school districts to place anyone who has served as a public librarian into the role of teacher librarian with no additional training.
- eliminate the local library property tax levy of 6-3/4 to 27 cents in favor of consolidating all city and county property tax levies.
- eliminate the Master's degree requirement for K-12 Teacher Librarians.
- restrict city and county property tax revenues in a way that could cause cuts in service for Iowa's libraries.
- eliminate the Commission on Libraries' ability to appoint a State Librarian and instead have the position appointed by the Governor, making the partisan organization political in nature.

The 90th Legislative Session has produced an unprecedented number of files and bills which harmfully impact the vital work of librarians and educators, as well as the pursuits of every student, library patron, and life-long learner in our state. Proposed legislation moves to pull longstanding trust in local control of library services into a consolidated framework no longer reflecting the unique needs and wants of individual Iowa communities.

Selection of library books and materials is not an arbitrary process. Librarianship involves collaboration between those who use the library and those who serve it. School boards approve reconsideration processes which require parent and student involvement alongside school librarians who work diligently to meet community feedback with educational standards. Like school boards, public library boards are composed of active and engaged members representing the communities their libraries serve. Public library

board trustees develop selection and reconsideration policies and practices which create collections curated by Iowans for Iowans.

As library professionals, we work collectively with and for the public to review and choose books. Reconsideration policies provide local parents, students, patrons, and library staff a voice to reconcile content concerns with access. Due process prevails when each library follows its locally-approved policy to ensure that the book is carefully reviewed and a decision appropriate to that community is made. One Iowa community cannot make the best possible decision for all Iowa communities. One Iowa parent cannot make the best possible decision for all of Iowa's parents.

Parents and legal guardians have a responsibility and a right to guide their children's use of library materials, resources, and services. This responsibility is balanced with other families' rights to make independent decisions, young people's developing right to privacy and the freedom to read, and the responsibility of schools and libraries to provide a wide variety of materials in keeping with their selection policies and procedures.

Local control allows Iowans to make the best choices for the readers, patrons, and students being educated and served in their area. Removing this process from the hands of local parties or creating a state-level list of restricted materials will have a detrimental impact on the right to read and access information freely. Chilling intellectual freedom with banned book lists and threatening to fine or arrest teachers and librarians for sharing books of literary merit creates a bleak future for Iowa.

Iowans founded the very principles of the Library Bill of Rights. In response to European totalitarianism, Des Moines Public Library Director, Forrest Spaulding, penned an anti-censorship policy which was adopted as the ALA Library Bill of Rights in 1939. This continues to be the national standard today, with policies and procedures in every Iowa school district, public library, and museum guiding democracy and painstaking efforts to meet reader interests, education, and growth. Iowans value education and should continue to hold the pursuit of knowledge as an individual and inalienable right close to our hearts.