



Fighting book bans in your public library or school!

ACLU South Dakota

Libraries and schools across South Dakota continue to see attempts to ban books in local communities. These efforts are driven by loud and activated groups that are attempting to limit First Amendment rights and silence marginalized voices. They do this by pushing local community library boards and school boards to ban books, library events, and other protected expression based on its content. But when the government bans books based on the content, that is censorship, and it is unconstitutional.

But it can be difficult for local elected officials to uphold these fundamental rights when the groups calling to limit speech and equal access are the only ones who speak out and show up at public meetings, often claiming to speak for an entire community. When free speech rights are being threatened in your community, each of us need to show up.

Steps you can take:

- Contact the ACLU of South Dakota. We want to know where you are seeing attempts to limit speech across the state. And, if helpful, we can assist you and others you recruit to fight back against any efforts to limit free speech and free expression.
- Attend a public meeting to show your commitment to free speech, whether by preparing your own remarks, standing in solidarity with those who do, making signs, or by otherwise showing your support in a peaceful and respectful way.
- Write emails, make calls, or speak directly to your local officials.
- Write an op-ed or letter to the editor in your local paper.
- Activate people to take action along with you.

Talking points you can use:

- The First Amendment prohibits government at the federal, state and local level from banning or restricting speech because they disagree with its content – or because they fear others in the community may disagree with it.
- Everyone has the right to read and learn free from censorship.
- When elected officials ban books based on their personal views or those of particular community members, it is unconstitutional censorship, and it is harmful.
- Censoring speech denies members of our community access to new, different ideas from which they could benefit.
- Everyone deserves the opportunity to see themselves in different stories.
- Voices of exclusion do not speak for our community, which values diversity and inclusion.
- Anyone can decide which speech and ideas they want their own family to access but they cannot make that decision for other families, and other members of our community.
- Librarians are trained in deciding which books should be included in library collections based on the needs of the community the library serves. Educators and other school officials are trained in deciding which books should be available to their students based on their age and educational needs. The government should let these professionals do the jobs they were trained to do, not substitute their own views.
- Illinois recently adopted a measure that protects library collections from efforts to ban books for ideological or political reasons. The law would block state grants to local libraries that ban books and take decisions about library collections away from the professionals. No community – including ours – should risk cuts to critical library services in order to placate loud voices who wish to dictate what others can and cannot read.

Find more information and resources at www.aclusd.org

