

The Truth About Banned Books Week

- **There is no national crisis of book banning.**

- Each year, the American Library Association (ALA) holds a so-called Banned Books Week to protest censorship. But when you examine the actual statistics behind this event, you see that few of these so-called “banned books” were actually removed from the shelves.
- The ALA includes among its list of “attempted bannings” mere requests or complaints—even when nothing has happened as a result. Even the ALA itself acknowledges that “in a majority of cases the books were not banned.”
- Even with this loose definition of “banning,” the ALA can account for only 513 incidents in 2008. According to the ALA, only 74 of those incidents involved books being actually removed from shelves. Seventy-four books doesn’t equate to a national book banning crisis, especially when you consider that there are some 82,000 public school libraries nationwide, not to mention thousands of community libraries.

So what is the real reason that the ALA dedicates time and resources to publicizing a “Banned Books Week” every year?

- **The ALA appears to be manufacturing a national crisis in an attempt to undermine the legitimate role that parents have in the educational process.**

- The fact is, that the majority of books on ALA’s “most challenged titles list” are eliciting parental concerns because of homosexual themes and sexually explicit content.
- Furthermore, a large majority of the ALA’s recorded book challenges occur in school libraries and are initiated by concerned parents.
- Those facts reveal that this isn’t really about a national book banning crisis—it’s about parents attempting to have a role in what their children are exposed to at school.

- **The truth is that parents not only have a right, but also a responsibility, to be involved in their child’s education process—especially in taxpayer-funded schools.**

- It’s unfair to attack parents and label them as “censors” simply because they want to protect their children from age-inappropriate and sexually graphic material.
- The fact is, school employees act as censors every day by selecting books and rejecting others to go in school libraries. So you could argue that it’s hypocritical to call their actions “selection” and the attempts of parents to be involved “censorship.”
- Though not every complaint filed may be legitimate, parents have a First Amendment right to express concerns. And we can trust the democratic process to weed illegitimate complaints out.
- Most schools have detailed processes in place for addressing parental concerns. So local communities, parents and schools, should have the freedom to work that process out together—without intimidation from a national group like the American Library Association.

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- **The ALA likes to act as if parents are censors and extremists. But it's actually the ALA—not parents—that has an extremist view.**

- The ALA holds the stance that anyone at any age should have unrestricted access to anything regardless of content—and this applies to the Internet, DVDs, books, magazines, what have you. That seems irresponsible in today's environment of online predators and hard-core pornography on the Internet.

- The desire as parents to protect kids from damaging influences is healthy and normal, not extremist.

- **The ALA says that Banned Books Week celebrates “the freedom to read” and “open access” for information that is “considered unorthodox or unpopular.”**

- If that's true, public libraries and the ALA should uphold their own principles—and accept books that reflect other points of view—including faith-based and socially conservative viewpoints on current-day issues like abortion and homosexuality.

- So when donating books reflecting these viewpoints, parents and students are simply asking for their perspectives and opinions to be fairly represented and included in the library selection. Donating books to libraries is one way that they can help create a climate of respect for *all* viewpoints in schools and communities.

- Many school library handbooks specifically state that libraries should support and reflect the diverse viewpoints of the community. Students of faith and those with socially conservative perspectives also want to be considered part of the community—and see their viewpoints accurately represented in the library collection.