

# Banned Books Week 2025

The ACLU of Ohio opposes censorship in all its forms. From books and radio to film, television, and the internet, we fight to ensure Ohioans have the right to read, watch, and learn without fear of government suppression. Book banning is one of the most common and pervasive forms of censorship in our society.

This year, though, Banned Books Week is situated in a moment where we are seeing extraordinary attempts at censorship directed at public and private broadcast corporations, newspapers and other news media, our public K-12 schools and higher education institutions, and so much more. The federal government, in particular, is wielding its power to suppress disfavored speech in ways that mirror McCarthyism.

Meanwhile, in so many cases for our education institutions, the focus of those oppressive, overbroad censorship attempts have been diversity, equity, and inclusion programming; those efforts directly mirror the focus on banning books dealing with themes of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Here in Ohio, in recent months the legislature has passed laws [broadly targeting our public institutions of higher education](#), as well as [how teachers can teach about sexual orientation and gender identity in K-12 schools](#). State lawmakers also attempted to tuck a provision into our several-thousand page budget bill requiring libraries to move books containing LGBTQ+ themes out of the view of minors, thus denying queer young people the opportunity to see themselves in the stories they read. Fortunately, Gov. Mike DeWine vetoed this ill-conceived provision, but the legislature can override this veto at any time until the conclusion of the 136th General Assembly at the end of next year.

These attacks on faculty's academic freedom and on our freedom to read and learn, though, will not stop us from defending those liberties. On the contrary, we remain hypervigilant for attacks from the federal, state, and local levels. This publication seeks to equip those who wish to join us in this fight with more resources and information on how to do so.

With all of that in mind, it remains vitally important to understand broadly how the process of challenging and banning books works in different settings (i.e. a regional public library or a school building's library).

**There is a difference between *challenging* a book and *banning* a book.** Before a book can be banned (and thus removed from the shelves of a public library or school library), someone must come forward and file a challenge to that book, typically by filling out a form to request that staff reconsider a book's place in the public or school library's collection.

- Some institutions may allow individuals to submit challenges to multiple titles at a time, whereas some may only permit one title to be challenged per submission.
- Once a book is challenged, the governing entity of that institution—usually a school district's superintendent and board of education, or a public library's board of trustees—must decide whether to remove the book from circulation based on its internal policies. Those policies vary by institution.
  - An institution may also decide to restrict access to a book based on age or other criteria.

We know from data compiled by organizations like the American Library Association (ALA) that book challenges and bans have exploded in recent years and that they disproportionately target Black, brown, indigenous, queer, and trans authors.

Fighting back against efforts to censor books can take multiple forms. Showing up to a school board meeting or a library board meeting to make your voice heard, organizing events like “read-ins” in your community, and quite simply just reading your favorite banned books and sharing them with your friends all are ways to take a stand.

Beyond those suggestions, though, the best way to fight back is to get involved! Consider joining the ACLU of Ohio Action Team; attending one of our Banned Books Bingo events co-hosted with our friends at [Red, Wine, and Blue](#); or getting involved with other partner organizations like [Honesty for Ohio Education](#).

In this era of censorship that extends well beyond book banning, we must all stand together and exercise our First Amendment rights. The ACLU of Ohio will continue to protect fiercely our right to free speech, expression, and inquiry in public spaces and educational institutions.

