



**Alaska Association of Student Governments**

**Resolution #13**

**AASG Does Not Support Book Bans**

**Submitted by: Kylie Orlando**

**October 13, 2023**

**Be it Resolved by the Alaska Association of Student Governments that:** Student Governments of AASG do not support books being banned throughout Alaska, and the country as a whole.

1. **Whereas,** The ALA (American Library Association) points out that their recent surveys show that a majority of voters — on both sides of the aisle — oppose efforts to have books removed from their local public libraries;<sup>1</sup>
2. **Whereas,** the last few months have seen a massive uptick in challenges and outright bans to books in libraries and schools all over the country, pushed, in many cases, by politicians attempting to weaponize “culture war” issues;<sup>2</sup>
3. **Whereas,** The ALA would typically not receive more than 500 challenges a year before 2020, then in 2021 an astonishing increase of 1,597 books were challenged, and it continues to rise each year;<sup>1</sup>
4. **Whereas,** The ALA keeps a list of the top ten challenged books;<sup>1</sup>
5. **Whereas,** The current list consists of *Gender Queer*, *Flamer*, *Tricks*, *The Handmaid’s Tale*, *Sold*, *Push*, *The Bluest Eye*, *This Book is Gay*, *Milk and Honey*, and *Maus I: A Survivor’s Tale*;<sup>2</sup>
6. **Whereas,** These books contain topics such as self-identity, sexual orientation/identity, LGBTQ+ experiences, self-discovery, sexual education, prostitution for means of survival, religious persecution, women’s rights, sexual slavery, racism, violence, etc.;<sup>2</sup>
7. **Whereas,** books can promote diverse intersectional experiences;<sup>6</sup>
8. **Whereas,** intersectionality identity markers are gender, race, disability, LGBTQ+, family structure, social significance, etc;<sup>6</sup>
9. **Whereas,** children’s books tend to depict protagonists that are "predominantly upper middle class, heterosexual, nondisabled, English-speaking, and male." This may make it

difficult for children to engage in learning if they are too marginalized to identify with such privileged characters;<sup>6</sup>

10. **Whereas**, Over 71% of all voters disagree with efforts to ban books, upwards of 79% of parents, and over 80% of students;<sup>8</sup>
11. **Whereas**, Sitka High School believes these are topics that are necessary for people to be educated about, and that cannot be done without books about them;
12. **Whereas**, around 90% of book challenges remain unreported and receive no media attention;<sup>1</sup>
13. **Whereas**, the ALA cannot track what they call “silent censorship,” when individuals take it upon themselves to make sure that books cannot be found in libraries;<sup>1</sup>
14. **Whereas**, it’s a relatively new thing for the ALA to see elected officials challenging books;<sup>1</sup>
15. **Whereas**, To counteract the campaigns challenging books, the ALA is launching a nationwide initiative meant to empower readers to fight censorship;<sup>1</sup>
16. **Whereas**, School boards across Alaska are banning books from learning curriculums;<sup>4</sup>
17. **Whereas**, School boards in Alaska, starting with the Mat-Su school district, banned *Invisible Man*, *Catch-22*, *The Things They Carried*, *I Know Why Caged Birds Sing*, and *The Great Gatsby*;<sup>4</sup>
18. **Whereas**, when the student representative on the Mat-Su school district school board questioned the selection process for a citizen’s library advisory committee to review books in Mat-Su schools, their role was significantly weakened;<sup>5</sup>
19. **Whereas**, when books were challenged in the Ketchikan School District, they voted to keep the books in libraries that certain community members found too based on “relationships and sexuality;”<sup>9</sup>
20. **Whereas**, additionally, Ketchikan’s city attorney, Mitch Seaver, issued a memo ahead of the meeting citing a wide range of court cases indicating that libraries cannot restrict minors’ access to materials unless they are “obscene”;<sup>9</sup>
21. **Whereas**, when concerning books, the definition of obscene is important because one key element is that to be obscene, a book must be “utterly without redeeming social importance to minors;”<sup>9</sup>
22. **Whereas**, Sitka High School Student Council believes that the books that are being banned do not fall under this definition of “obscene;”
23. **Whereas**, it is important for school boards to remember the voice of the students is the most important one because that is who they are serving;<sup>5</sup>
24. **Whereas**, Multiple books were banned due to racial premises and what was called an “anti-white” message;<sup>4</sup>
25. **Whereas**, Beau Hedrick, the Sitka High School librarian, believes that “banning books that have been read in school for generations takes away many people’s historical links they would not have otherwise.”
26. **Whereas**, many banned books teach children about real world problems;<sup>3</sup>

27. **Whereas**, many students learn more about the world through books than their own eyes;<sup>7</sup>
28. **Whereas**, Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom, believes, “Most libraries and schools have policies that say that people can certainly raise concerns about books. And we support that. That’s part of the First Amendment, the right to petition the government. But there should be a process involved with that. There should be an effort to verify their claims about the book, to read the work as a whole, to determine whose information needs are being served by the books;”<sup>1</sup>

**Therefore, be it resolved that the Alaska Association of Student Governments** does not support book bans in our state, and country.

**Action Statement:** if passed by the General Assembly of AASG, this resolution will be brought before the Sitka School District School Board for their consideration, as well as the Matanuska Susitna School District School Board, the Library Citizen Advisory Committee, the State Board of Education, and the House and Senate Education Committees.

Sources:

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2. “The Most Banned and Challenged Books in 2023.” Earlybirdbooks.Com, 14 June 2023, <https://earlybirdbooks.com/banned-books-2023>.
3. ago, Löki Gale Tobin Updated: 22 hours ago Published: 1. day. “OPINION: Read Banned Books.” Anchorage Daily News, <https://www.adn.com/opinions/2023/10/02/opinion-read-banned-books/>. Accessed 3 Oct. 2023.
4. Stimson, Brie. “Alaska School Board Bans 5 ‘Controversial’ Books, Including Maya Angelou Work.” Fox News, 29 Apr. 2020, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/alaska-school-board-bans-5-controversial-books-including-maya-angelou-work>.
5. Anchorage, Tim Rockey, Alaska Public Media-. “Mat-Su School Board Proposes Sidelining Student Member after Pointed Exchanges on Controversial Topics.” Alaska Public Media, 28 Aug. 2023, <https://alaskapublic.org/2023/08/28/mat-su-school-board-proposes-sidelining-student-member-after-pointed-exchanges-on-controversial-topics/>.
6. “The Importance of Representation in Books.” Verywell Mind, <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-importance-of-representation-5076060>. Accessed 12 Oct. 2023.
7. Guff, Elle Reeve, Samantha. “Children and Parents Begin Uphill Fightback against Book Bans in Florida.” CNN, 6 Oct. 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/06/us/florida-banned-books/index.html>.
8. SZALUSKY. “Large Majorities of Voters Oppose Book Bans and Have Confidence in Libraries.” News and Press Center, 24 Mar. 2022, <https://www.ala.org/news/press->

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9. Ketchikan, Eric Stone, KRBD-. “Ketchikan Library’s Advisory Board Votes to Keep Book on Relationships and Sexuality in Teen Section.” Alaska Public Media, 13 Apr. 2023, <https://alaskapublic.org/2023/04/13/ketchikan-librarys-advisory-board-votes-to-keep-book-on-relationships-and-sexuality-in-teen-section/>.

The resolution passes with noted opposition

Passed by the Fall 2023 General Assembly of AASG hosted by West Valley High School

*Danika Hamm*

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AASG Vice President, Danika Hamm

*Kathleen A. Navarre*

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AASG Executive Director, Kathleen Navarre