

Below you will find some useful talking points to help you prepare for the Freedom to Read Community Day of Action on Saturday, October 19, 2024. They can be used in a range of ways, including speaker remarks, social media posts, op-eds, letters to the editor or elected officials, or simply to educate yourself. You are welcome to customize these to reflect your own voice. Speaking out is an important part of elevating this important issue, and we are grateful for your actions in our collective effort to protect the freedom to read and unite against book bans and censorship!

Value of Libraries

- Libraries are for everyone. They are spaces created for everyone. Public libraries are intended to serve as community hubs for all community members and school libraries are places for all learners to gain knowledge and build a lifelong love of reading.
- Regardless of birthplace, income, race, gender identity, or sexual orientation, libraries are free for all people to learn, gather together, and improve themselves.
- For over a hundred years, libraries have represented the best of America:
 - Libraries are a symbol of freedom of speech and freedom of thought.
 - Libraries stand for opportunity for all, that all people have fair and equitable access to information.
 - And at libraries, we believe we can come together, across differences.
- Libraries provide access to books that offer teachable moments for readers of all ages and expand our understanding of people with different backgrounds, ideas, and beliefs.
- Libraries embody the values of a free society and the American dream.

Freedom to Read

- We believe that the essence of a free society begins with reading.
- The freedom to read is a fundamental American right, and the right to access knowledge and reliable information is essential to the functioning of democracy, which at its core relies on an informed citizenry.
- Reading is a gateway to learning. Learning leads to knowledge. And knowledge is power.
- All people have the right to read or not read what they want; it is our constitutional right, and therefore should be one of our protected fundamental freedoms.

Rise in Book Bans

- A vocal minority in some states across the country are demanding book bans and enacting policies that restrict access to books, eliminating choice and taking away the freedom and access of entire communities.
- Many of the books being challenged are for young people and are by and about LGBTQIA+ people and people of color.
 - Titles representing the voices and lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ people and people of color made up 47 percent of those targeted in censorship attempts.
- In 2023, the American Library Association reported the highest number of challenged book titles ever documented. The number of titles targeted for censorship at public libraries increased by 92% over the year before, while school libraries saw an 11% increase.
- The rise in book bans, coming at a time of deep polarization within our country, is dangerous.
- Books educate readers about the world and show the range of the human experience. They also allow readers to see themselves and affirm their identity. This is particularly important for young people.
- Reading is how we foster growth and empathy.
- Silencing the voices that represent perspectives that differ from our own further sows division and hate—and is at odds with the vision of a free society upon which America was founded.
- We can trust individuals to make their own decisions about what they read and believe, a core American principle, allowing readers the right to choose and have a sense of agency.

Time for Action

- During a time period when citizens are becoming more aware of the importance of civic engagement and paying closer attention to public policy, libraries across the country will gather their patrons and supporters on Saturday, October 19, to unite against book bans and demonstrate that the freedom to read is an enduring, nonpartisan American value that must be protected.
- By joining together and making our voices heard nationwide, we can protect our access to information, ideas, and opportunity for ALL.
- The best way to stop book bans is active civic participation.
- Use every avenue to let your elected officials know that you value your libraries—and your public and school library workers!—and support the freedom to read. Stand up for your community. Help this movement by protecting and providing a platform to those who do not have one, and help ensure that books are kept as tools to provide understanding of complex issues.
- At all times and in a variety of contexts, it is crucial that you make your voice heard. As part of your engagement and participation in the democratic process, make sure you vote this November and in every election you can.
- Make sure you have a library card! Libraries are extensions of community, and securing a library card is easy and free. Don't miss out on the opportunity to join your community members in enjoying all the things your local library has to offer.

