



Virginia Public Library Directors' Statement on Challenges to Virginians Freedom to Read

Calls to remove books immediately from Virginia libraries have increased over the past month. As public library directors, we respect the right of each person and each parent to determine what material suits their unique needs and values. We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society, and access to a wide range of viewpoints makes connections among people and fosters mutual understanding. For this reason, we reject the idea that books should be banned or censored from library shelves.

Library collection policies are developed in each community, and approved by locally-elected officials, whether on school boards, or through library boards, boards of supervisors, or city councils. These policies strive to create and maintain library collections for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people. Recent calls to ban books leave no room for the voices of those community members who value the threatened books. We believe everyone within our community deserves to find materials on our shelves to meet their unique needs and interests.

The Virginia Public Library Directors Association stands with our colleagues in school libraries, and calls on all parties to respectfully engage each other when there are disagreements. We believe Thomas Jefferson's words are true for all people: *"[I]f a nation expects to be ignorant & free, in a state of civilisation, it expects what never was & never will be. [T]he functionaries of every government have propensities to command at will the liberty & property of their constituents. [T]here is no safe deposit for these but with the people themselves; nor can they be safe with them without information. [W]here the press is free and every man {person} able to read, all is safe"*. We encourage our communities to work together to protect free access to information and Virginians' freedom to read.

Virginia Public Library Directors Association
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