

KYGA 2024 DIGITAL TOOLKIT

BOOK BANS

ACLU
Kentucky

2024 DIGITAL TOOLKIT

OVERVIEW **I**

TALKING POINTS **II**

SOCIAL MEDIA **III**

TRADITIONAL MEDIA **IV**

SCRIPTS **V**

CONTACT US **IV**

BOOK BANS

OVERVIEW

Following a disturbing national trend, the Kentucky General Assembly proposed over a dozen bills attacking LGBTQ Kentuckians and threatening our democracy in 2023. Contained in some of this legislation was proposed censorship in our public-school libraries, thinly veiled as “parents’ rights” legislation. Many of the proposed bills were defeated, but two particularly egregious drafts became law, over the Governor’s veto and without his signature.

The first of these is Senate Bill 5, which creates a new section of the Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) to define “harmful to minors”; require local boards of education to adopt a complaint resolution policy to address parent complaints about materials that are harmful to minors; require the school to ensure that a student whose parent has filed a complaint does not have access to the material; require the Kentucky Department of Education to promulgate model complaint resolution policy. The bill was flagged as “emergency,” meaning it went into effect immediately after the session ended.

Under the bill, material is considered “harmful to minors” if it:

- “Contains the exposure in an obscene manner, of the unclothed or apparently unclothed human male or female genitals, pubic area, or buttocks or the female breast, or visual depictions of sexual acts or simulations of sexual acts, or explicit written descriptions of sexual acts.”
- “Taken as a whole, appeal[s] to the prurient interest in sex.”
- “Is patently offensive to prevailing standards regarding what is suitable for minors.”

The second bill is Senate Bill 150, which contains vague language about materials in public schools that has been used to justify banning books.

Titles most targeted books in similar bans across the country usually center LGBTQ, Black and Latino voices. Recent years have seen a record-breaking number of attempts to censor reading material via legislation.

The following groups have been particularly active in pushing these bans forward:

- Moms for Liberty
- No Left Turn in Education
- MassResistance (classified as an anti-LGBTQ hate group by the

BOOK BANS

OVERVIEW (CONT.)

Southern Poverty Law Center)

- Citizens Defending Freedom
- Parents' Rights in Education

Most of these groups have sprung up since 2021, when the current wave of objecting to books about LGBTQ people and people of color first started. The largest by far is Moms for Liberty, which formed in Florida in 2021 and now has 284 chapters in 44 states. Eighty-one percent of all the school districts in the U.S. that have enacted book bans are in or adjacent to a county where there is an active chapter of at least one of these groups.

Most of these bills are carbon copies of model legislation from the American Legislative Exchange Council, a nonprofit organization of conservative legislators and private sector representatives who draft and share model legislation for distribution among state governments.

2024 LEGISLATION

Only two weeks in to the 2024 Legislative Session, lawmakers have filed two dangerous bills that will, if passed, inevitably lead to censorship in schools and further challenges to materials kept on library shelves. The two bills are:

HOUSE BILL 191

Josh Calloway, Shane Baker, Jennifer Decker, Ryan Dotson, Chris Fugate, Mark Hart

Not satisfied with the censorship already enacted via Senate Bill 5, HB 191 amends the Kentucky Revised Statute to “require the local board of education to allow parents and guardians an opportunity to orally recite passages from materials, programs, or events subject to appeal; require immediate removal of the material, program, or event if the board denies a parent or guardian the opportunity to orally recite passages.”

SENATE BILL 93

Steve Meredith, Gary Boswell, Donald Douglas, and Lindsey Tichenor

This bill is state-sponsored censorship. It seeks to remove any training or efforts focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging from our primary schools. The bill also seeks to remove any language related to a trauma-informed approach in Kentucky K-12 schools.

TALKING POINTS

TALKING WITH LEGISLATORS

GENERAL TALKING POINTS

- The government shouldn't make misguided attempts to suppress our right to freedom of expression by banning books.
- We all have a right to read and learn free from viewpoint-based or partisan censorship.
- Censoring books by and about people of color and LGBTQ people is discriminatory and antithetical to our First Amendment rights.
- All young people deserve the right to read and learn about the history, experiences and viewpoints of all our communities in this country. This holds true in school libraries and public libraries too.
- All young people deserve to read and learn an inclusive and complete history in schools, free from censorship or discrimination.
- Books on library shelves don't necessarily reflect the views of a particular school district— they offer access to the entire spectrum of human knowledge, art, and ideas. Through the library shelves, kids can explore ideas and learn to think for themselves.
- Limiting the books available in public and school libraries shrinks the world for students and limits their ability to explore different ideas, viewpoints and topics.
- All young people, especially students of color and LGBTQ students, deserve an equitable education and the right to learn and talk about issues such as race and gender.
- Students who don't have a free and open exchange about our history could repeat the mistakes of that past, ensuring a legacy of discrimination and discounting the lived experiences of Black and Brown people, women and girls, and LGBTQ+ individuals.

PUBLIC LIBRARY-SPECIFIC TALKING POINTS

- The First Amendment protects the right to receive and share information and ideas. This holds true in schools and especially in libraries, which exist to enable people to encounter and explore different ideas, topics, and viewpoints.
- The library is a place where we are free to encounter and explore new ideas, viewpoints, and to find the things we enjoy reading. We all have a right to learn free from viewpoint-based or partisan censorship.
- The government shouldn't make misguided attempts to suppress our right to free expression by banning books from public libraries.
- Libraries are an entry point to a whole universe of ideas. Maintaining the breadth of available books from varying viewpoints and backgrounds is essential to preserving our First Amendment rights to receive and share ideas.

TALKING POINTS

TALKING WITH FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS

GENERAL TALKING POINTS

- Freedom of expression protects our right to read, learn and share ideas. I don't want the government – or even my fellow Kentuckians – to decide what I can and can't read.
- We all have a right to read and learn without censorship.
- Censoring books by and about people of color and LGBTQ people is discriminatory and goes against the First Amendment. What happens when the government decides people like me should be censored?
- All young people deserve the right to read and learn about the history, experiences and viewpoints of ALL communities in Kentucky. We have a complicated history, but it is also rich and important. We don't want to lose our ancestors' stories.
- All young people deserve to read and learn a complete history in schools, not just the parts the government decides they should learn.
- Just because a book is in the library doesn't mean schools are teaching it. I talk to my kids about what they're reading and learning at school so I can answer questions and help them. But I also trust my kids to explore ideas and learn to think for themselves.
- Limiting the books available in public and school libraries shrinks the world for Kentucky kids. Our children deserve to see what exists beyond the borders of our communities, counties, and our commonwealth.
- All young people, especially students of color and LGBTQ students, deserve an equitable education and the right to learn and talk about issues such as race and gender.

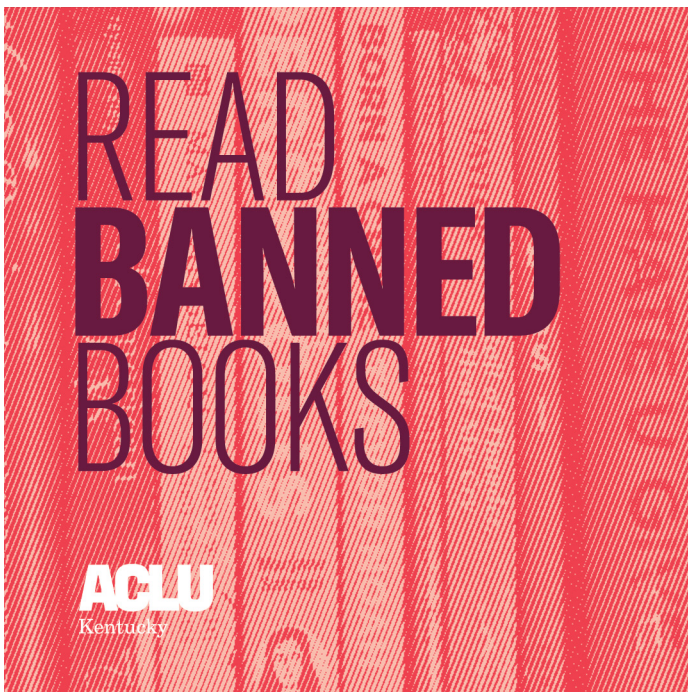
PUBLIC LIBRARY-SPECIFIC TALKING POINTS

- The First Amendment protects the right to receive and share information and ideas. School libraries are for everyone, and no one should get to decide what another person is allowed to learn.
- All kinds of people use libraries for all kinds of reasons, and they should be free to explore new ideas and find material they can relate to or learn from.
- The government shouldn't make misguided attempts to suppress our freedom of expression by banning books from public libraries.

SOCIAL MEDIA

When posting about legislative issues, always check the ACLU of Kentucky's channels for content to share! We are @ACLUofKY on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Threads](#). Following our feed is the best way to find up-to-date information and graphics. If you want to make your own posts about this issue, here is some sample text. Add personal stories and details to make more impact!

GRAPHICS



SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

SOCIAL MEDIA (cont.)

FACEBOOK

Lawmakers are trying to legislate free thought in the Commonwealth by banning instruction on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging from public institutions. Call your Senator or Representative at 1-800-372-7181 and tell them you OPPOSE HB 191, SB 93, and any other legislation that attempts to ban ideas or make kids feel wrong for being different.

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST: TWITTER/X

#KYGA is trying to legislate free thought by banning instruction on DEI from public institutions. Call your Sen. or Rep. & tell them you OPPOSE HB 191, SB 93, and any other bills that ban ideas make kids feel wrong for being different. #KYGA24 #bansoffourbooks

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST: INSTAGRAM

Lawmakers are trying to legislate free thought in the Commonwealth by banning instruction on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging from public institutions. Call your Senator or Representative at 1-800-372-7181 and tell them you OPPOSE HB 191, SB 93, and any other legislation that attempts to ban ideas or make kids feel wrong for being different. #KYGA24 #bansoffourbooks

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST: THREADS

Lawmakers are trying to legislate free thought in the Commonwealth by banning instruction on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging from public institutions. Call your Senator or Representative at 1-800-372-7181 and tell them you OPPOSE HB 191, SB 93, and any other legislation that attempts to ban ideas or make kids feel wrong for being different. #KYGA24 #bansoffourbooks

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

SAMPLE OP-ED - AIM FOR 500-750 WORDS

A variety of individuals write opinion articles, or op eds, for news media to share. Sometimes they are certified experts, sometimes they are everyday people who feel strongly about an issue. These brief essays can help the audience better understand a complicated issue or help them relate to something they haven't personally experienced. These pieces can be extremely powerful and persuasive.

If you would like assistance reviewing, drafting, editing, or pitching an op-ed to newspapers, reach out to someone on the communications team. We are happy to help!

FORMS OF PERSUASION (USE ONE OR MORE):

- **Personal Experience:** The writer describes an experience he or she has had.
- **Expert Opinion:** The writer draws on the opinion of an expert—someone trained in a particular area, or someone who has relevant personal experience.
- **Example:** The writer provides an example that supports a larger idea or pattern.
- **Analogy:** The writer compares the situation to another similar situation.
- **Facts and Statistics:** The writer uses facts or numbers to prove their idea. Often this information comes from other sources, such as books, newspapers, or websites.
- **Logic:** The writer uses reasoning or logic to argue their point.
- **Emotion:** The writer makes an emotional appeal to the reader.

I. INTRODUCTION

- Hook:** The beginning is your chance to capture your reader's attention. What can you start with that will compel your audience to pay attention? Perhaps an anecdote or surprising fact?
- Context:** Now back up a little bit. Explain what the issue is at hand. In a few lines, provide some background and context.
- Thesis:** Finally, make an argument. Tell your reader where you stand on this issue.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA (cont.)

II. FIRST BODY PARAGRAPH

- a. **Evidence #1:** Describe the central piece of evidence that supports your position.
- b. **Tie Back:** Make sure to connect this evidence back to your main argument, explaining to readers how it supports your thesis statement.

III. SECOND BODY PARAGRAPH

- a. **Evidence #2:** Describe a second piece of evidence that supports your position. Try using a different type of persuasion (see list below).
- b. **Tie Back:** Again, make sure to connect this evidence back to your main argument, explaining to readers how it supports your thesis statement.

IV. THIRD BODY PARAGRAPH

- a. **Counter Argument:** What would be the main argument of the opposing side?
- b. **Rebuttal:** What is your response to this argument? Why doesn't it apply to this situation/context?

V. CONCLUSION

- a. **Summary:** In just a few lines, remind your reader of the main argument and evidence.
- b. **Thesis:** No need to repeat your thesis word-for-word but remind readers what you're arguing and why they should care.
- c. **Personal Comment, Call to Action, or Question:** The last few sentences of your essay will linger in your reader's mind? What do you want to leave them with?

TESTIMONY

TELL YOUR STORY

Have you even wondered who the people are who sit in front of lawmakers in Frankfort to talk about issues affecting our communities? They're everyday Kentuckians who are passionate about making Kentucky a better place for their families, helping communities thrive, and moving Kentucky forward.

Anyone can testify at a committee hearing in Frankfort. Committee hearings are where bills are discussed and voted on, so they can move from their committee assignment to the full legislative chambers. Amendments and bill language can change all the way up to the full vote, and testimony can influence legislators' opinions on how our laws should read.

Everyone is passionate about something, and Kentucky's General Assembly conducts business in committee hearings with real-world implications for everyone who lives here. And while it may seem like a lot of work to prepare testimony, travel to Frankfort, and spend time in a hearing room waiting for lawmakers to hear from us, it is vital to our democracy.

Take book bans, for example. Lawmakers need to hear from people who will be impacted by these bans. Parents who want their children to see books on library shelves with characters they can relate to, people who want to learn about our history – our real history – and other cultures, people who want a place to feel welcome and represented – all these individuals are potential voices for testimony. Lawmakers can only work with the information they have, and if the people of Kentucky don't talk about how bills will impact them, the legislature will write the laws governing our people without the complete picture.

If you're interested in testifying in Frankfort, let us know! We can help draft, edit, and polish your testimony and even attend the hearing with you (as long as we have available staff that day). See the Contact page at the end of this toolkit.

SCRIPTS

CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR

Every call counts! When you call legislators to tell them how you would like them to vote on a certain bill, they receive a physical piece of green or red paper, representing your view. Many lawmakers say they are influenced by how many green or red slips they receive. These slips are what make phone calls so effective.

Calling the legislative message line is toll-free and only takes a few minutes. Call every day if you have the time. You don't even have to know your legislators' names but be prepared to share your address so operators can send your message to the right place.

1-800-372-7181

TELEPHONE SCRIPT

My name is [NAME] and I am your constituent. I am calling to voice my strong opposition to House Bill 191 and Senate Bill 93, or any legislation that threatens freedom of speech and expression in Kentucky. Thank you.

EMAIL SCRIPT

My name is [NAME] and I am your constituent. I am writing to voice my strong opposition to House Bill 191 and Senate Bill 93, or any legislation that threatens freedom of speech and expression in Kentucky. Thank you.

CONTACT US

Our work and our democracy depend on participation from all Kentuckians. Help protect democracy in the commonwealth and make your voice heard.

COMMUNICATIONS STAFF

communications@aclu-ky.org

Angela Cooper
Communications Director

Kira Meador
Graphic Designer

Taylor Killough
Communications Manager

CONTACTING YOUR LEGISLATOR

The Legislative Research Commission was created in 1948 as a fact-finding and service agency. The Commission operates as the administrative and research arm of the General Assembly.

At the LRC website, you can find out who your legislator is, see who has filed bills, read the draft of bills under consideration, view committee schedules and agendas, and more!

LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE: 1-800-372-7181

LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION

<https://www.legislature.ky.gov>

LIVE LEGISLATIVE COVERAGE ON KET

Kentucky Educational Television — KET — is Kentucky's largest classroom, serving more than two million people each week via television, online, and mobile.

Most Kentuckians can't travel to Frankfort to testify or meet in person with legislators. KET live streams committee hearings and activity on the House and Senate floors for free, so anyone can watch and listen to the issues being discussed first-hand. Learn more at www.ket.org.