

Rogue Librarians

Bonus: Election Episode

Please note: this transcript was auto-generated by Apple Podcasts.

Welcome to a bonus episode of Rogue Librarians.

We are usually a podcast in which two librarians discuss banned books.

But today, as we hope to help our listeners prepare for the upcoming election, we will be discussing current and proposed legislation involving banned books.

We are your hosts, Marian.

And Dorothy.

And we are the Rogue Librarians.

We are.

So, if you're joining us for the first time, please understand that Marian and Dorothy are our chosen pseudonyms.

We do this because of the intensity of the fight over book banning.

We don't want to speak for the organizations that we work for, and we are also just protecting ourselves from harassment.

If you have any questions, corrections or information to add, send us an email at roguelibrarianspodcasts@gmail.com, or visit the roguelibrarians.com, or follow us on Instagram or Facebook at [roguelibrarianspod](https://www.facebook.com/roguelibrarianspod).

We would really like this to be a conversation.

We most definitely would.

Well, just a couple of weeks ago, we released some bonus episodes in recognition of Banned Books Week.

As you know, Banned Books Week is all about celebrating our freedom to read.

Certain organized groups have attacked and continue to attack many incredible life-saving books with attempted challenges and bans because they touch on tough topics or present new diverse viewpoints.

We recognize that diverse perspectives in literature are crucial.

And so we wanted to offer another bonus episode to talk about how voting, your vote, ties into this.

Before we get started with the items we've compiled, I've wanted to plug an excellent episode of On The Media from WNYC Studios.

The episode is called A Reporter's View from Beirut, and the new film plumbs the depths of Netanyahu's corruption.

But the parts that I want to shout out starts at about the 40-minute mark when the host Brooke Gladstone interviews Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson, whose children's picture book and Tango Makes Three is among the long list of banned titles across the country.

Hear why they're suing in Florida to make their book and others accessible again.

We'll put a link in the show notes.

first, it's encouraging to know that there has been a congressional resolution where Representative Raskin from Maryland and Senator Schatz from Hawaii have co-authored a bicameral resolution, which just means it goes into both the House and the Senate.

And it, quote, expressing concern about the spreading problem of book banning and the proliferation of threats to freedom of expression in the United States, end quote.

So the resolution mentioned specifically ways that book challenges and censorship harm everyone.

You can read the entire resolution on the National Coalition Against Censorship website, I'm sure among other places.

And we will put a link in the show notes.

Yes.

Well, that's good news.

At least we need some good news in this world.

I think what everyone needs to know, needs to know, is that our ability to read freely is connected to our democratic process.

The valuable website, libraries2024.org states, quote, voting in the 2024 elections is a powerful way to protect our freedoms.

The people we elect have a big say in policies that affect libraries and our freedom of expression, end quote.

Because of this fact and the fact that some elected leaders are fighting to ban books and restrict your freedom to read, libraries2024.org conducted some candidate surveys in some of the states where book banning has been prominent.

The basic takeaway is that those who responded overall support libraries and schools, and believe that, quote, librarians are essential to student success and are a crucial part of the education system, end quote.

Which fantastic, great news.

As with any survey, though, it's important to know how and from whom the data was gathered.

So in this case, we sort of noticed that though they sent the survey to all lawmakers in those states, generally only 20 to 30 percent responded.

So it's great to know that 90 percent of those, 20 to 30 percent that responded, support the library mission.

It by no means paints the whole picture.

Those who responded are likelier to care about libraries in the first place.

So I would not want to get complacent based on that information.

Yes, that is definitely true.

And as we know, complacency or distraction is kind of what brought us to where we are.

We are today anyway, so we need to stay vigilant.

But all that said, there was some interesting data out of Texas.

Yeah, Texas has been, as most of you know, a leader in book challenges and book banning.

However, the recent survey reveals that there have been some significant divisions among the candidates, particularly on issues having to do with censorship, book bans, and the role of libraries in education.

So that offers a little bit of positivity.

In terms of support for libraries, despite these differences, Texans show there is a general consensus on the importance of libraries and librarians.

In fact, 73 percent of candidates strongly agree that school librarians are vital to students' educational well-being.

So that is encouraging.

Though they continue to try and ban books, so, you know, take that with a grain of salt.

And then there is the parental rights issue, which has popped up all over the country.

But in Texas specifically, while the candidates agree on the importance of parental rights, 77 percent seem to believe that these rights should not extend to limiting other students' access to books.

So I find that a bit encouraging as well.

But we must remember it's 70 percent of the people who responded.

Correct, which was low, as I recall.

Wasn't it like somewhere around 20 percent or something?

Yeah.

A pathetic number.

Yeah.

We will have information in the show notes.

You guys can check that all out.

We should have a disclaimer saying, we try our best to get the facts straight, but there's a lot of information.

So that's true.

And I do want to point out that my recollection is that that survey went out to the largest school districts in Texas.

But it's oftentimes those smaller school districts where people's thinking is much more, shall we say sheltered, and therefore we need to really watch out for those small districts.

And my guess is their responses would not coincide with what we just shared.

And we're going to get into that and how so much of how you can help is at your very local level.

But anyways, the biggest way to make a difference as you know is to vote, vote, vote.

So we're going to highlight a few of the state-wide ballot measures that impact libraries.

And then like good librarians, we're going to tell you how to find out more because there's no way for us to share absolutely everything or even to feel confident that we have found absolutely everything.

We have jobs, we have lives, we can't dedicate our whole existence to this research.

So we're going to help you figure out where to find information.

Right.

And additionally, I just want to add that as librarians, it's not our job to tell you what to think.

It is our job to give you access to information so that you may make your own decisions.

And that is what we're trying to do here on the Rogue Librarians.

But let's start with the state of Utah.

Utah currently has a ballot amendment that's going to be voted on on November 5th.

And that is known as Amendment A to the Utah Constitution.

Utah voters who care about schools and school libraries are urged to oppose this amendment because it seeks to, quote, dismantle a long-standing mandate that safeguards funding for public education in Utah, end quote.

Remember, if there isn't a stable income for schools, school libraries are among the first to suffer because books are expensive.

And the ones that go in libraries are particularly expensive because they're designed to be read by multiple people.

That's why they're cheaper on Amazon, because they're not school library editions or library editions.

Anyway, there are already places around the country that don't have school librarians.

In fact, the state in which I currently reside does not have school librarians, and it's heartbreaking.

And many don't even have a library space.

So for more information on this particular bill in Utah and why the library's 2024 website opposes it, you can go to their website and that will appear in our show notes.

So next up is North Dakota.

Measure 4 on the November 5th statewide ballot would, quote, eliminate property taxes based on assessed value, end quote.

Who doesn't love less taxes?

Schools and libraries, that's who.

That's usually who gets the brunt of paying less taxes.

They just don't have another plan for how to pay for this stuff.

I also thought Republicans would be interested to know that among the groups opposing this measure and they do oppose it, is a group called Keep It Local.

My understanding of Republican ideology, and please correct me if I'm wrong on this, is that they're all about more local control, less government control.

So it just to me feels not especially partisan.

Anyway, Libraries 2024, which is where we got most of this information, they urge all North Dakotans to vote no on Measure Four and keep control of our local services where it belongs in the hands of your communities.

Indeed, which is why we need to focus on local, but we'll get to that.

So we do want to say that while these bills all sound somewhat innocuous on paper, in the end, it's all about the money and where it goes, specifically your tax dollars, which I don't know about you, but it puts me immediately to snooze.

Definitely, I glaze over.

Yeah, I kind of do, but we have to focus.

We have to focus.

If you can just focus between now and the end of the election, and then we'll give you a break, and then we'll have you focus again.

But this is super important.

So another example of this money issue is Kentucky, which has a constitutional amendment on its ballot on November the 5th called Constitutional Amendment 2.

That's very original.

It allows for public funds to be diverted from public schools to private institutions, and I know Kentucky's been trying to do this for a while.

So what this is is this means that Kentucky's school libraries, which currently are among the best in the nation, interestingly enough, could see critical budget cuts, which would harm students' access to essential resources, obviously.

So we want to protect public education and public libraries, specifically school libraries, by voting no and o on Amendment 2, just to be clear.

In Kentucky.

So if you're in Kentucky, no on Amendment 2.

Yeah.

And please know that we can really only scratch the surface here.

So again, show notes.

We're going to tell you where you can find more information.

One positive bill that people can support is in California, where you can vote yes to Prop 5.

They are seeking to lower the number of votes required for local bond measures from 66.67% to 55%.

So still a majority.

They're still not going to do anything without a majority, but it does lower the barrier to making any kind of change.

And this is not just about libraries.

It would impact infrastructure, affordable housing, public safety.

So if you're in California, vote yes on Prop 5.

Again, more information in the show notes.

So those are some of the specific statewide issues, but where it is absolutely the most important area for you to focus your time and energy, that is in paying very close attention to your local schools and library boards.

So wake up.

I know this is somewhat snooze worthy, but we need your focus right now.

Now, these races are very frequently overlooked, especially in big election years such as this one, where we have a big presidential choice ahead of us.

However, since most of the book challenges and public and school library attacks come from the state and local levels, it is imperative not to overlook these races.

In many ways, this is how we got to the current book banning crisis we're facing.

Very conservative, moms for liberty types sneak into local elections knowing few voters are paying attention.

So don't let this happen in your area.

We consulted the ACLU, American Civil Liberties website, and I want to share this quote, quote, In 2023, more than 100 classroom censorship bills aimed at restricting students and teachers from discussing

race, gender, or sexual orientation were introduced in states across the country.

32 bills became law.

That's 3-2.

32.

The year prior, the country saw the highest number of attempted book bans in 20 years, with more than 1,000 demands to censor library books.

This all happened at the local or state level.

So again, please inform yourselves about your local candidates and vote accordingly.

And definitely, most importantly, please vote.

To assist voters in understanding the flowchart of decision-making, we recommend checking out the ACLU website, particularly the page entitled School Government 101, which will be in our show notes.

And this was very helpful both to Dorothy and myself in just understanding how states and local governments end up with the laws we have on the books.

So check that out.

I'm looking at that quote that they are restricting students and teachers from discussing race, gender, or sexual orientation.

And I'm thinking, what are the three most relevant things to teenagers?

Right.

Right?

Those dynamics about race and gender and orientation are playing out in their hallways every day.

And to deny information on ways to process all that information, I think is just bonkers.

And, you know, again, that information might be very uncomfortable for some people to think or talk about, but it's necessary to learn it.

We all had to learn it.

And having a trusted source to find out you're not alone about certain things is literally life-saving.

All right.

So moving on, how to find out more information about your local candidates?

Because we certainly cannot do that for all of you.

So there are a few websites with interactive maps.

So you plug in your address and all the ballot information about you specifically in your local elections will appear.

So here's a couple of sites that we recommend.

There's Vote 411.

There's AARP, Interactive Voting Guide, where you can then click on your state.

There's everylibrary.org.

So that should also highlight things to do with libraries.

And ballotpedia.org, which is a wiki where you can type in your address and they will show the specific ballot issues that are happening where you are.

So one thing to note about all these websites is that not every candidate responds to the questions, but there are often links to their web pages, to statements that they have made.

So you may need to dig a little further to find out what you think about a candidate.

But at a quick glance, it would appear that the party that is firmly in power is often the one that has not responded to some of the issues.

But you can find the incumbent's voting record usually there.

And just a librarian-friendly reminder, check out multiple websites to make sure you're getting facts, and not just quotes taken out of context with their meanings twisted around.

If what you read seems odd, fact check it.

And I would add, I like to also rely on organizations that I strongly believe in, like moveon.org or like my local teachers' union, to see what they're recommending, too.

Because I need all the help I can get in trying to really understand what I'm voting for.

I think that's really great advice.

Thank you, Dorothy.

So these sites that Dorothy just mentioned also offer some good solid information about how you may contact your elected officials.

For further up-to-date information on any book banning politics, please check out these websites.

Of course, there's the ala.org.

And on that website, you'll want to check out the link for the Office for Intellectual Freedom.

You will also want to check out the page that is entitled Banned and Challenged Books.

And I want to give a shout out to ALA for a newly added feature on this page, which is called Book Resumes.

And that offers a quick summary of each challenged book, along with an age recommendation for that book.

And what's great about it is this is a living, breathing document, and so it's being continuously updated, as sadly more and more books are challenged.

I'm sure there's no way they've got all of them in there yet, anyway.

But they're working on it, and I think that's super important.

It'll be a great tool for parents, kids, librarians, everyone.

It's a great place to look for why a book might be challenged.

It doesn't say, but it'll usually just give you a good summary and you can read between the lines, especially knowing the main reasons that books are challenged, as we've said many times.

Some other great sites, web pages to look for are Book Riot, which they have a literary activism newsletter and it's excellent and very up to date on what's happening around the country in local and

state elections.

Every library, the website Every Library has a whole section on political activity.

Unite Against Book Bans website has great information on how to get organized and involved and advocating against book banning and it includes talking points and just some great ideas.

Then of course, Pan America is excellent.

They do a great deal of research and collect data on all these issues.

Once again, these will all be linked in our show notes.

That's a lot of information.

Isn't it?

Please make sure you are registered to vote, which by the time we release this, it's probably too late, either you are or you aren't.

But I'm not sure.

So check in your state.

Make a plan to go vote.

We can assure you that every vote matters.

Those on the opposite side of these issues will be out in force taking things out of context and trying to persuade the uninformed with inflammatory information to vote for censorship, which none of us want.

I just saw a meme on Twitter that kind of summed it up for me.

It starts off with something we've heard before, right?

Those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

The second half is what gave me the chills.

Those who prevent history from being taught, fully intend to repeat it.

Right?

It's not an accident.

No, no, this is all very, very deliberate.

And destruction and fear mongering are definitely deliberate.

So gosh, Dorothy, I want to go vote now.

I want to go vote right this second.

I actually could, I think, vote early voting in my state.

There is early voting in a lot of places.

So check that out on your local website.

So vote, vote, vote, vote.

So thank you so much for joining us on The Rogue Librarians, especially for this episode.

And we always want to thank Chris, who created our lovely music, for Lizzie, for just support to get us off the ground, and to Heather for research and social media assistance, for Alana, everything, for everything, everything.

We miss you, Alana, and wish you well.

Dorothy, thank you for doing all the editing recently.

Hopefully, I'll learn that and be able to assist soon.

And thank you to our patrons.

All of you are just the best, and we could not do this without your continued support.

Mostly, though, thank you, readers, because you are the reason we do this podcast, and we all know that books are meant to be read.

Dorothy, it's always a delight to discuss these issues with you, even though we wish we didn't have to discuss these things, but thanks so much for spending a part of your day with me.

You're welcome, and thank you, Marian, for just continuing on this project with me together.

We look forward to catching up with you later on a future episode of Rogue Librarians, when we will soon be discussing an actual book, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.

So if you haven't read that one, go read it so you can join us.

Please.

Bye.