

# TN Librarians & Impact of Public Chapter 782 & Censorship Stories

Tennessee Association



of School Librarians

OCTOBER 2024

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WEBSITE:

[www.tasltn.org](http://www.tasltn.org)

# TASL IS...



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Volunteer -led professional organization for school librarians, supervisors, retired librarians in TN

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Affiliate of the American Association of School Librarians

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Key provider of professional development for school librarians in TN

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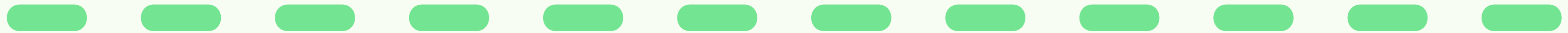
Focused on strengthening school library service in TN

## Mission & Vision:

TASL works to build an informed and literate society through connecting and equipping school library leaders to innovate and advocate for all learners.

# AAMA

Public Chapter 744



*AAMA Amendment*

Public Chapter 782

Maintain a current list of materials on the school website

Selection policy & Reconsideration policy

Procedure to periodically review the collection to ensure items are age appropriate

A work can be judged in whole OR in part

Cannot include the prohibited topics OR be patently offensive

60 day timeline for a district to review a book

# Prohibited Topics Defined in § 39-17-901,

- Excess violence
- Nudity
- Patently offensive
- Prurient interest
- Sadomasochistic abuse
- Sexual conduct
- Sexual excitement

# Survey Respondees

(as of Oct. 2024)

144

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School  
Librarians

31

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Counties

TN has 95 counties

24

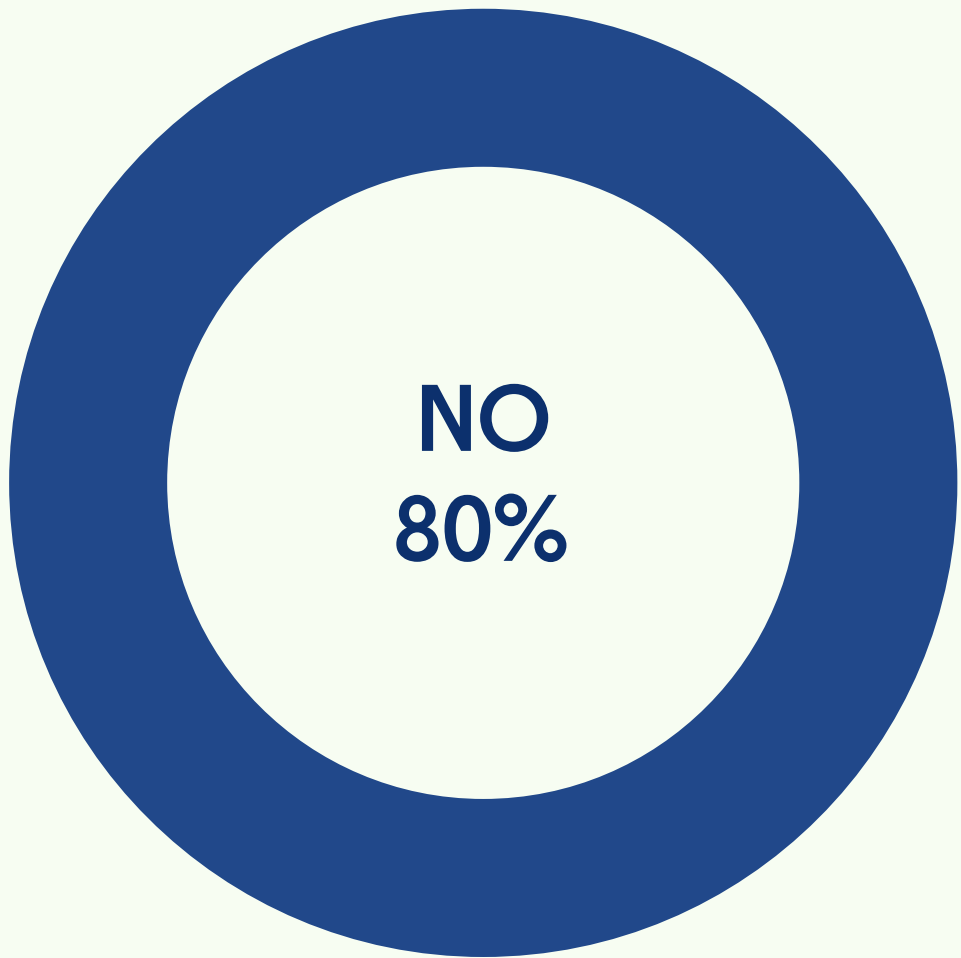
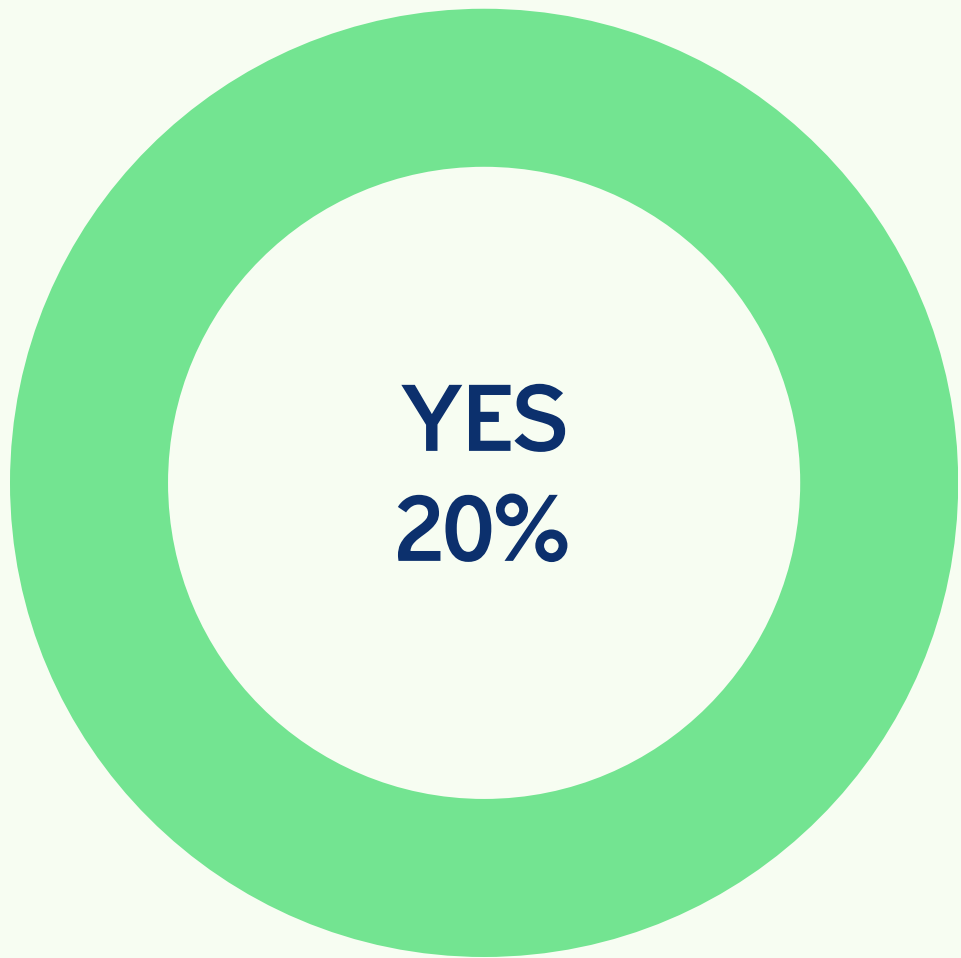
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Rural &  
Suburban  
Districts

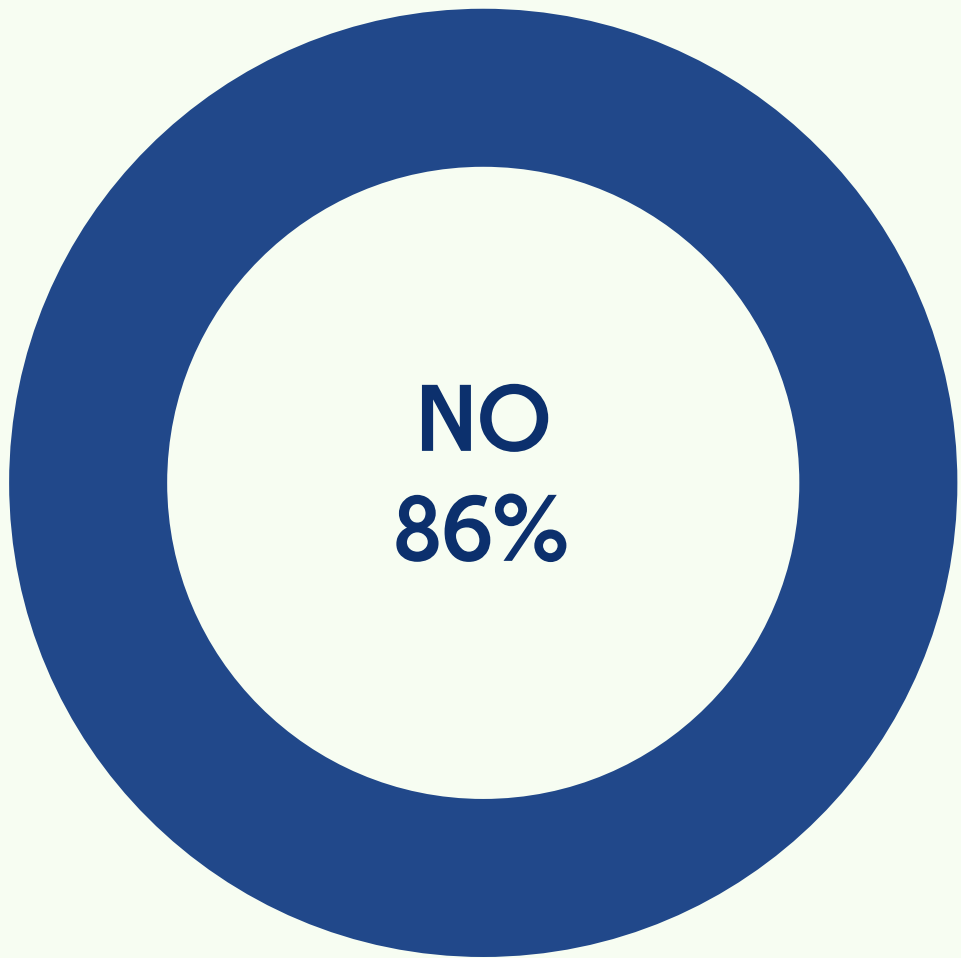
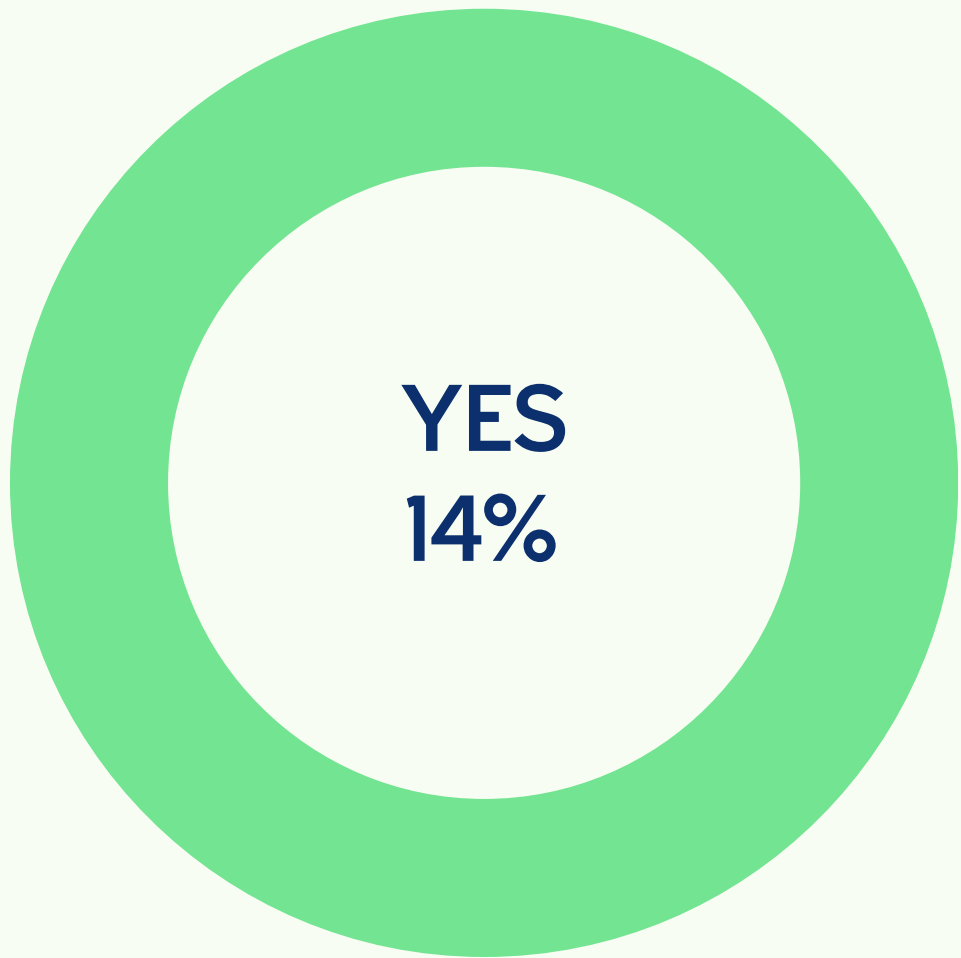
TN has 147 public school districts.

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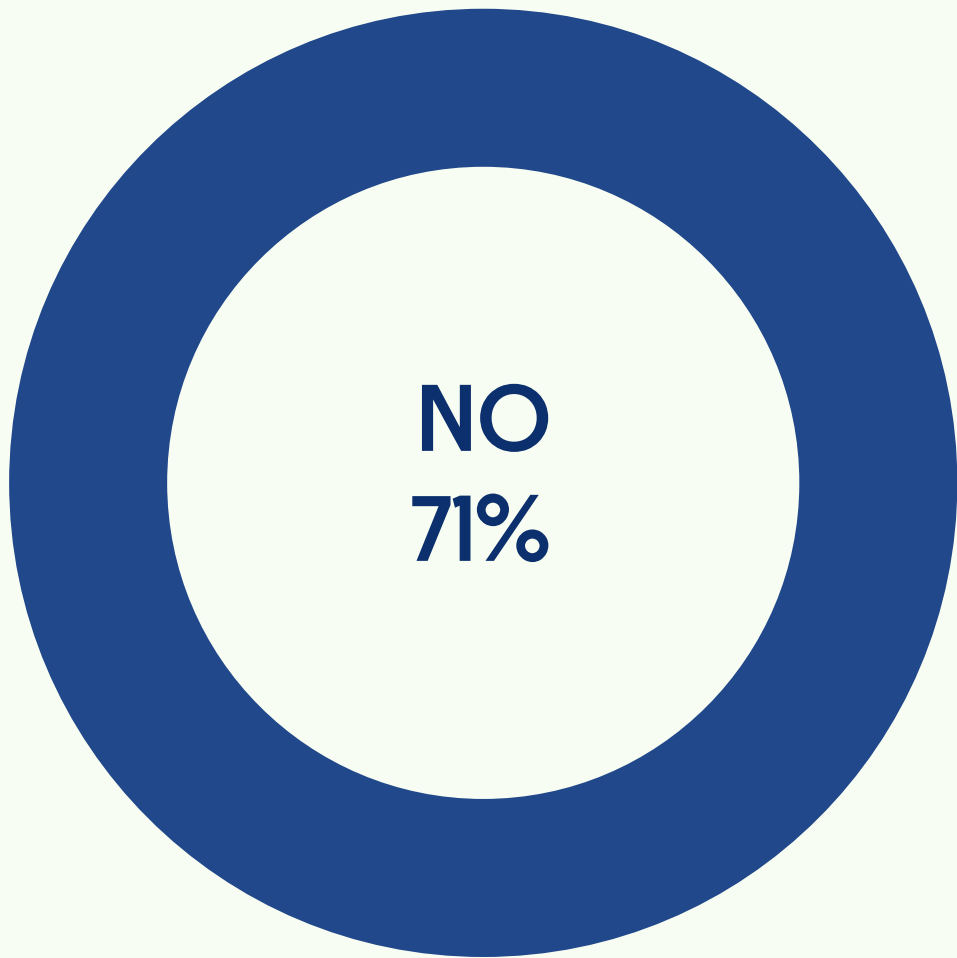
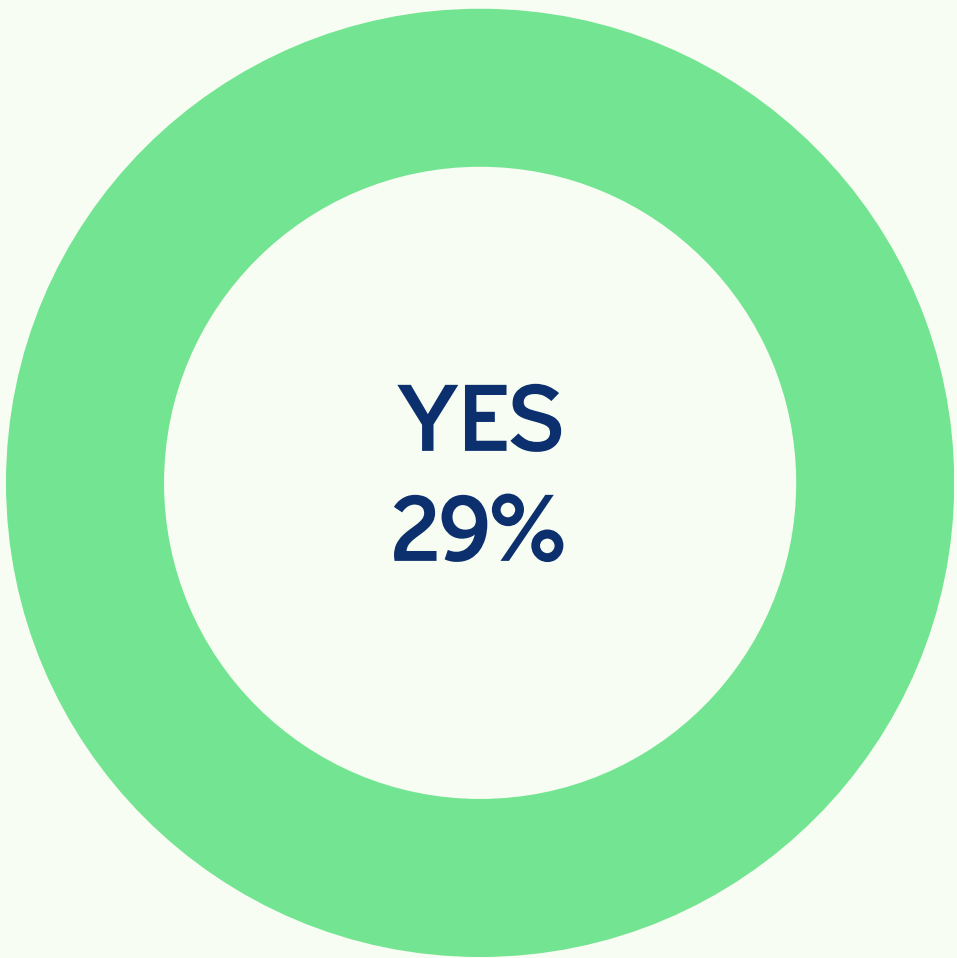
**Has someone from *district leadership* asked you to remove certain books from the library **WITHOUT** going through a book challenge process?**



**Has an *administrator* from your school asked you to remove certain books from the library **WITHOUT** going through a book challenge process?**

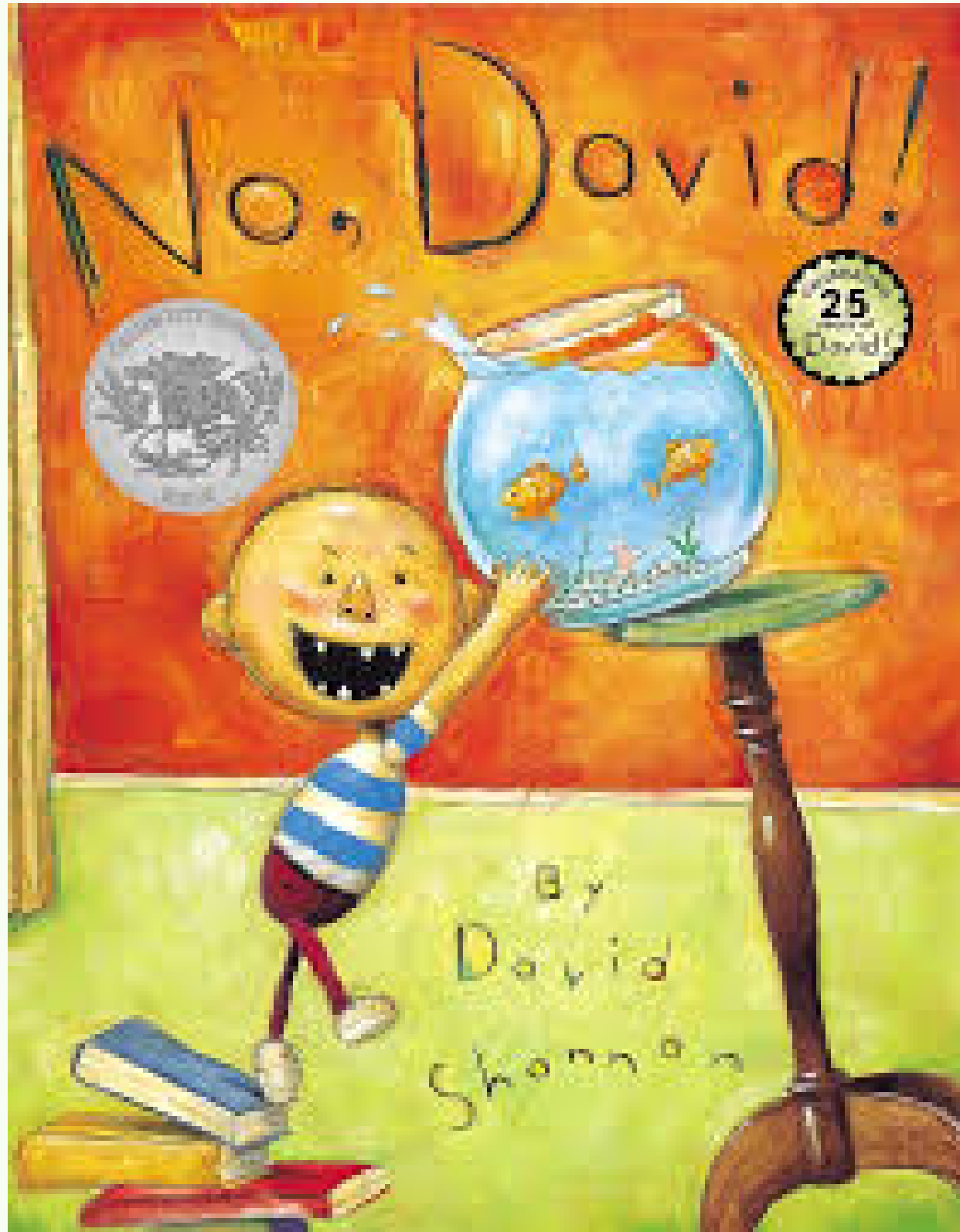


# Do you have to have your book order approved by an administrator or at the district level?





# Title Removed By Some TN Librarians: No, David!



“Nudity” means the showing of the human male or female genitals, pubic area, or buttocks with less than a fully opaque covering or the showing of the female breast with less than a fully opaque covering of any portion below the top of the nipple, or the depiction of covered male genitals in a discernibly turgid state;

# CONFUSION

- Told by admin to use professional judgement
- Asked to pre-emptively remove books that might be offensive or impacted by P.C. 782
- Should we be pulling books or wait 'til someone files a complaint?
- Waiting on guidance
- Board members not reading challenged items and voting to remove them.
- Books are removed and not accessible while undergoing reconsideration.
- 3 novels challenged and kept but require parental consent
- Does this law apply to The Bible or other religious texts?
- Doesn't this take away the fundamental right of parents to choose what their children can read away from them?

# UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

- Students will be further behind with an inability to access more complex texts.
- Creates a climate of fear; discourages people from becoming a librarian
- ▲ • Asked to pre-emptively remove books that might be offensive
- Increased self-censorship among librarians.
- ▲ • Concern for students who feel like their state doesn't accept or want them; lack of access for marginalized students
- Anger and fear directed at educators.
- Extreme pressure and stress on educators; low morale
- Longer wait times to get books into the hands of students when book orders must be reviewed.
- Limited access is felt in areas where there are no public libraries or they are not easily accessible.
- Removal of fine arts, mythology, classics, and religious texts
- ▲ • Misinterpretation of the law (Ex: no books containing LGBTQIA+ characters or themes)
- Providing texts for those reading above grade level and those whose maturity surpasses the grade level they are in.
- Loss of current and relevant books that are of interest to students
- Impacts to meeting the TN State Minimum Requirements for school libraries (Collection counts and collection age)
- Impacts to AP test readiness; ability to be prepared for jobs that require higher order and critical thinking

# QUOTES

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**“My county immediately removes books when challenged, until the review process is complete. I had over 180 titles removed last year. The review committee has made decisions about approximately 80 of them, deciding to remove/ban about half. 100 still remain removed while the review process continues.”**

# QUOTES

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**“I’m fearful of getting in trouble. I’m fearful of breaking the law. Ordering books has become a trying experience.”**

# QUOTES

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**“I’ve removed 300 books in the first month of school.”**

# QUOTES

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**“I am not sure those that wrote it understand what it can limit, including religious text like the Holy Bible. It also take the fundamental right of parents to choose what their children can read away from them.”**

# QUOTES

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“Why are we not being trusted to do our jobs? Libraries and public schools are for everyone to feel safe, accepted, and seen. Various viewpoints are needed to get a full scope of the world. Intolerance is being tolerated in the name of protecting our children. All it does is empower the oppressor and further silence the oppressed.”



# QUOTES

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We are going to be placing our students even further behind because we are removing items from school libraries that can further their education and development of critical thinking. How are students supposed to access reference materials and advanced texts when they are being removed from the libraries they have access to.

# QUOTES

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Making books unavailable to students that have no other access. Unintentionally removing books that are appropriate and necessary. Demonstration of a fundamental distrust of educator's and families decisions. Creating a climate of fear and uncertainty for librarians, and discouraging people from entering the profession.

# QUOTES

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I am more hesitant to place books in my library that deal with LGBTQ topics.

# QUOTES

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Fear of letting students READ!!!! we are already on a downward slope of fostering a love of reading, taking books away just may make librarians and teachers give up!!!!

# QUOTES

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Books such as *No, David*, a kindergarten favorite, must be removed because it depicts a child's bare back bottom. This seems like a book that is caught up in the large net of "inappropriate" when the book is highly appropriate for its intended audience of preschool/1st grade.

# QUOTES

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Students who are having a difficult time or have a traumatic past may not be able to find themselves in books. I also believe diverse authors and books about LGBTQIA+ issues are being suppressed.

# QUOTES

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Children are going to show deficits in their reading and writing scores and abilities because they will develop a resentment over being basically forced to read materials that they have zero interest in and we will have a state of non readers. This could lead to industry leaving Tennessee because our citizens will not have the stamina, background knowledge, and reading abilities to perform tasks at a professional level.

# QUOTES

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Teachers and librarians will likely self-censor more-- some teachers already got rid of their classroom collections and are relying only on the library collections. Not all libraries are funded well enough to be the only source of "for fun" reading at a school. Not all districts have public libraries and not everyone is able to get to a public library.



# QUOTES

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Art books will likely have to be pulled due to nudity. That may or may not be unintended. As we know, most of the consequences are very intentional. Our manga which kids love will likely have to go.

# QUOTES

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So. Many. Unintended. Consequences.  
Removing ANY and All books with the hint or whiff of violence and sex? Goodbye classics.  
Goodbye romance novels (not even the spicy ones! Just regular old kissy kissy books!) HUGE job for librarians who have worked for YEARS to develop a collection that reflects their communities. What a tremendous insult.

# QUOTES

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Major student disappointment  
over books which they can no  
longer check out.

# QUOTES

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It is heartbreaking. Students are losing access to materials. A school library is for ALL and just because one or two people are upset, it shouldn't mean that other students risk losing access materials.

# QUOTES

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We all know what books certain people are targeting, and these same people would NOT want the Bible removed. So the obscenity clause needs to be returned to the law because many books that are needed by various curriculum and programs (like AP and IB) need to be accessible to students and teachers without fear of retribution or slander on the librarians who have them in their collection.

# QUOTES

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The law is being interpreted with bias. Last year we were told by a supervisor that LGBTQ+ material was against the law to have on our shelves, despite the bill failing to pass into law.

# QUOTES

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Books will be pulled because principals and supervisors are afraid of being in the news or upsetting the community.

Librarians will be taken out of the reconsideration process. We are not respected or valued or trusted.

# QUOTES

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**This makes it harder to allow my students to have input on what books they would like to see in our library.**



# QUOTES

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Librarians and educators are concerned that we will end up pulling a massive amount of books without looking at the books as a whole.

# QUOTES

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Books will be removed with no valid reasons. Children will be denied materials valuable to their education because some random legislator will get to choose what they are allowed to read.

# QUOTES

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Librarians feel attacked.

# QUOTES

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We are going to be left with very few books on our shelves.

Society is going back in time not forward and the youth are going to suffer from illiteracy.

# QUOTES

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Students are unable to see themselves or their peers in the literature. This makes social and emotional questions difficult talk about.

# QUOTES

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It's a *slippery slope*... and I'm fearful of the next topic that will be regulated.

# QUOTES

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The loss of our freedom is huge and will be felt for generations. It is a handful of people against us that we must comply. Retirement will be earlier than I had expected.

# QUOTES

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More workload and stress on librarians to be personally responsible for the content of every book in the library whether we inherited it in the collection or added it.



# QUOTES

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A lot of work for us. Many books are being removed that don't fit the criteria. We are afraid of being sued over a book we didn't realize fell under that category. The explanations for the criteria are vague and it is sometimes hard to determine if a book falls into that criteria.

# QUOTES

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Having to re-evaluate our entire catalog is so time consuming that we aren't able to do other projects. I spent an hour+ and did books by authors with a last name that ends in A-C that have the mature tag. You can imagine how small of a number that was. We will never finish this process and be good stewards of our resources in a current manner.

# QUOTES

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Are district leaders, school board members, or state legislators concerned about school libraries meeting State Minimum Requirements for item count? Who is providing funds to replace the books we are being asked to remove?

# QUOTES

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Books that students have built their reading lives around are being removed on the basis of cartoon nudity. The work as a whole can't be considered because of one illustration or diagram. Some of the books and subjects are being taught as part of a state sanctioned curriculum, but we can't have them in our school library. The legislature says there will be no fiscal impact but who is going to pay to replace these books and fill the gaps this creates in our collections.

# QUOTES

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**This law creates more workload and stress on librarians to be personally responsible for the content of every book in the library whether we inherited it in the collection or added it.**

# QUOTES

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**Librarians are scared to purchase books.**

# QUOTES

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There are unintended consequences in that we are being asked to remove books that represent different perspectives and historical events and to remove quality books based on part, not all, of the content of the books.

# QUOTES

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Students will stop using the library as we won't have books that they want to read.



# Thank you

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