



July 10, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Support for Anti-Book Ban Coordinator

Dear Mr. President,

As the nation's oldest and largest professional writers' organization, the Authors Guild very much looks forward to working with the new anti-book ban coordinator, a role tasked with tackling a matter of urgent significance to the American people. A variety of polls have found that most Americans oppose book bans. The *Washington Post* recently reported that the majority of the challenges to books have been filed by [just 11 people](#). It goes against the very nature of freedom of speech and ideas to allow such an extreme minority to control what everyone else is permitted to read. As author Nora Roberts said in a recent CNN interview when a series of her romance novels were removed from a high school library:

“This is the tyranny of the few over the many. That’s just not American. Reading and books open windows and doors to other worlds, other points of view, other experiences. Isn’t that what we want in our educational system? Don’t we want kids to read for fun, so they become readers and broaden their outlook?”

Regardless of one's political, social, or religious views, suppressing books is anti-democratic, harmful, and a dangerous step toward autocracy. The Authors Guild opposes book bans generally, whether prompted by challenges from the political right or the left. Challenges to books from both ends of the political spectrum are on the rise because of divisiveness or fear-based concerns over the ideas they express.

More recently, we are seeing a spate of new state laws and local government initiatives requiring the removal of books from schools and libraries. Most of these laws or ordinances are so broad and ambiguous that they force libraries, schools, and even bookstores to remove books out of fear that the books *might* possibly violate the new rules; the uncertainty baked into these laws creates an atmosphere of fear and self-censorship. Recent state and local bills—including some that have already been enacted into law in Arkansas, Indiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Tennessee—make it a crime for teachers and/or librarians to provide access to books that deal with sexuality and sexual identity, and attempts have even been made to prohibit their display, let alone sale.

These laws constitute unconstitutional restrictions on the First Amendment and, needless to say, are contrary to a healthy democracy, which requires vigorous literary debate, a diversity of ideas, and a tolerance for discourse that some find offensive or challenging. It is the height of irony that some organizations with the word “liberty” in their title are determined to limit the fundamental liberty people possess to read what they choose.

The Authors Guild advocates for the rights of professional authors to create, publish, and earn a sustainable living as fiction and nonfiction writers, poets, translators, and journalists. These bans make it harder for authors to sell copies of their books, and thus harder to make a living. This is why we litigate and submit amicus briefs in key court cases to support freedom of expression and challenge the removal and banning of books. Our projects include the Stop Book Bans toolkit and a Banned Books club with over 6,500 members on the Fable platform so that young people and others around the country can read and discuss books subject to recent bans. The Authors Guild is an active member of Unite Against Book Bans and works on campaigns with the National Coalition Against Censorship—we know what writers are saying, how librarians and bookstore owners are feeling, and we’d like to communicate those messages to you.

The new anti-book ban coordinator will be perfectly situated to speak out about the value of books and reading on a national level, and to help set many of these challenged books into a clearer context. The Authors Guild is ready, willing, and able to support the coordinator, and would be happy to continue this conversation after their appointment.

Sincerely,

Cheryl L. Davis
General Counsel, The Authors Guild