

NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST CENSORSHIP

KIDS' RIGHT TO READ

November 15, 2023

Board of Education
Menomonee Falls Schools
W156N8480 Pilgrim Road
Menomonee Falls, WI 53051

Dear Members,

The National Coalition Against Censorship is an alliance of national nonprofit groups dedicated to protecting freedom of expression, including the rights of K-12 students, teachers, and staff. We are writing to protest the improper removal of over 30 books from the Menomonee Falls High School library.

According to media reports,¹ Superintendent David Muñoz made the decision to remove 33 books without following the district's challenge procedures. That policy² requires that challenged books must first be reviewed by a media specialist and a school administrator. Then, if their decision is appealed, a reconsideration committee must be convened to "objectively examine" the challenged material. The committee must consist of librarians, teachers, school administrators, and parents. The superintendent can only act on the challenge if the reconsideration committee's decision is appealed. Therefore, the superintendent has clearly violated district policy by removing books without convening a reconsideration committee.

In addition, Superintendent Muñoz's actions were contrary to the best interests of the district and its students. Using a reconsideration committee, pursuant to district policy, would ensure that decisions about the educational value of books are made with input from all stakeholders. A diverse committee is more likely to accurately assess the value of books for students. Oftentimes book challenges are emotionally charged; therefore, it is important that district practices ensure that all parties feel that their views have been considered and that decisions are made in an objective manner. The use of a reconsideration committee furthers that goal.

Finally, permitting administrators to unilaterally remove books may encourage others to file challenges in the hopes that the administrator may remove books that would otherwise be retained by a committee. Therefore, following your policy will reduce the time spent adjudicating frivolous challenges.

¹ Hess, C. (2023, October 18). Menomonee Falls School District removing more than 30 book titles from high school library. Wisconsin Public Radio.

<https://www.wpr.org/menomonee-falls-school-district-removing-more-30-book-titles-high-school-library>

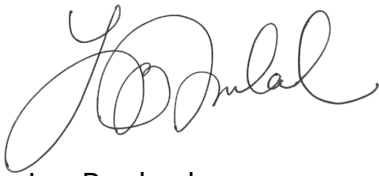
² School District of Menomonee Falls. (2023, April 11). CHALLENGES TO LIBRARY/MEDIA MATERIALS. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GZHP71slI4CfbTZh-s_G4nZgxhNer7I/view

For all these reasons, we urge the district to return all 33 books to the high school library and to adjudicate any challenges in accordance with board policy.

Please let us know if we can be of assistance. NCAC has created a resource to help school officials address the problem of book challenges, *Material Review and Policy Guidelines and Examples*. It is attached.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Lee Rowland
Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship
Lee@ncac.org

Co-signed by: American Booksellers for Free Expression
The Authors Guild
Children's and Young Adult Books Committee, PEN America
Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

A project of the National
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