



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Rachel May

## Senator Rachel May and Assemblymember Anna Kelles Continue to Push for the Freedom to Read with New Bill

DAN MESSINEO November 2, 2023

| ISSUE: **BOOK BANNING, READING**



Senator Rachel May (D-48th District) builds on her Freedom to Read Act with a new bill (S7677) requiring libraries that receive state aid to implement policies prohibiting book banning based on partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

This bill comes during Banned Books Week (Oct. 1 to Oct.7), which calls attention to the drastic increase in state boards, local school boards, and others removing books they

consider “obscene” or “dangerous” from schools. According to PEN America, instances of book banning skyrocketed during the 2022/2023 school year. U.S. public school students saw over 15 hundred titles removed from classroom and library shelves, a 33 percent increase from the previous year. Texas, Florida, Missouri, Utah, and South Carolina are the top five states for book banning, which mainly includes race and LGBTQ+ topics and themes.

Ample research backs Senator May’s effort to keep books on shelves, which shows children are more excited and, therefore, more likely to read books that feature characters with whom they can identify. Moreover, “protecting” children from negative information or harsh realities about issues like the history of slavery or injustice makes them less resilient and less vigilant about preventing such outcomes in the future.

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*“With our rich diversity and our commitment to free expression in New York State, we must ensure students have access to a broad range of materials to let them pursue a love of learning and reading. When we guarantee students have access to many viewpoints, we give them the chance to enrich their minds and broaden their perspectives. Whether they embrace or reject those perspectives, the opportunity to explore challenging ideas is valuable to students’ development as learners and as active participants in our society,” said Senator Rachel May.*

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*“As an assemblymember, educator, and scientist, I firmly believe that banning books not only stifles intellectual freedom and the development of critical thinking skills but also denies individuals the opportunity to engage with diverse perspectives, fostering a more enlightened and empathetic society. I stand against the censorship of ideas and support the power of literature to challenge, inspire, and shape our minds for the better. This bill (A.7843) supports this by prohibiting the removal of library materials, services, or programming because of partisan or doctrinal objections, an important protection that will safeguard future*

*generations' freedom to learn," said Assemblymember Anna Kelles.*

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2023-S7677

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Ensures that staff in libraries are able to curate collections, services, and programming that reflect diverse interests

October 02, 2023

In Senate Committee [Libraries](#)

Sponsored by Rachel May

Do you support this bill?