

# GO! GO! GO!

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

### Action Items and Commitments

#### Are your books being banned?

Educate yourself about book and theatre banning happening where you live. It may not be called "banning." It may appear in the form of an "approved books/materials" list. You may hear "procedure to challenge books," "parents' rights," "age-appropriate subject matter." It may mean no access to books at all. It may be happening in secret. Schools and organizations may generally be making more conservative choices, or editing the pieces they select, before the news reaches you.



[www.NoBookBans.com](http://www.NoBookBans.com)  
[@nobookbans](https://twitter.com/nobookbans)

### What can you do?

#### ...At Your Theatre



##### TAKE INVENTORY

- Are your seasons and activities for kids inclusive? Do all kids feel welcomed? Do all kids see themselves in your shows and activities?
- Do you find yourself avoiding "difficult" or "political" subject matter?
- Are your board, staff, and artists as diverse as possible?
- Review your policies around show selection/development and how to respond to challenges. Who has the decision-making power? Are they a trained professional?

##### TAKE ACTION

- Who are the groups most targeted in your community? Are you working to lift up their stories?
- How is your solidarity with targeted communities reflected in your communications and social media?
- Pledge support to theatres in targeted areas who put themselves on the line. How can you materially support theatres who have budget challenges due to theater banning policies?

##### SPEAK UP

- Share resources connecting your audiences with groups that are primarily involved in anti-book-banning work or supporting targeted communities.
- Send a message about pending legislation: "We believe all stories matter! Tell your elected officials that hate has no place in our cities!"

#### ...In Your Communities



##### PAY ATTENTION

- Pay attention to your local school boards and district admin. What are they prioritizing in their budget? Speak up at school board meetings and support students' access to stories that reflect their experience AND stories that expand their worldview. You can do this even if you do not have children. It is of value to everyone to have access to free, quality public education.
- Pay attention to your municipal and county leadership. Local officials have a ton of influence over your day to day life. What are they prioritizing in their budget?
- Get to know your elected officials at all levels. They work for you (even if you didn't vote for them.) Communicate with them about your values.

##### TAKE ACTION

- Start a community free expression club - a place for teens to learn about their First Amendment Rights.
- Go to school board meetings no one wants to go to and speak.
- Reach out to the people being targeted and find out what support looks like for them.

#### ...For Your Libraries



- If there are already groups in your area organizing to oppose book bans, materially support them and share their message!
- Request books in your libraries to show support for targeted books and authors!
- Attend city council meetings and make your voice heard!
- Get library cards for libraries that are under attack!
- Use your libraries!
- Send Letters of Support!
- Contact your political leaders!
- Attend library functions!

### Talk with a lawyer about the best ways to use your org's free speech rights!

#### DO Use Your Org's Free Speech!



- Individuals and organizations have a right to free speech. There are some limitations for non-profits.
- Lobbying is communicating with your elected officials so they take your values into account when creating legislation. Individuals can do it and so can organizations.
- Speaking up is only lobbying if it involves a specific piece of legislation, so your org can speak out against a law that would allow book banning as long as you don't commit "substantial" time and resources to it.
- Your org can speak up about topics like "My Story Belongs" and "Save Our Libraries" as much as you want because those are not specific pieces of legislation.
- If you want to teach your community members how to lobby, that also counts as lobbying and again, would need to not constitute substantial time and resources for your org.

#### Org Don'ts



- **DO NOT** endorse candidates for office. (This includes incumbents.)
- **DO NOT** feature one candidate at an event without inviting all candidates.
- **DO NOT** tell people in affected states to just leave, say "that's what you get," or say you hope the state secedes
- **DO NOT** self censor and keep plays or stories out of your season or work in anticipation of pushback
- **DO NOT** segregate stories by diverse authors in your black box theatre

#### Potential negative consequences

- It's unlikely you would lose your 501(c)(3) status unless you turned your entire org into a lobbying machine.
- More likely you may face pushback from parts of your community and on social media.