

# AAUW California

Book Banning and Curricula  
Censorship in California?  
AAUW California to the Rescue!

Sep 21, 2023



# Speakers



**Kathi Harper**  
AAUW California Public Policy  
Chair, School Board Project



**Seena Trigas**  
President,  
Carlsbad-Oceanside-Vista



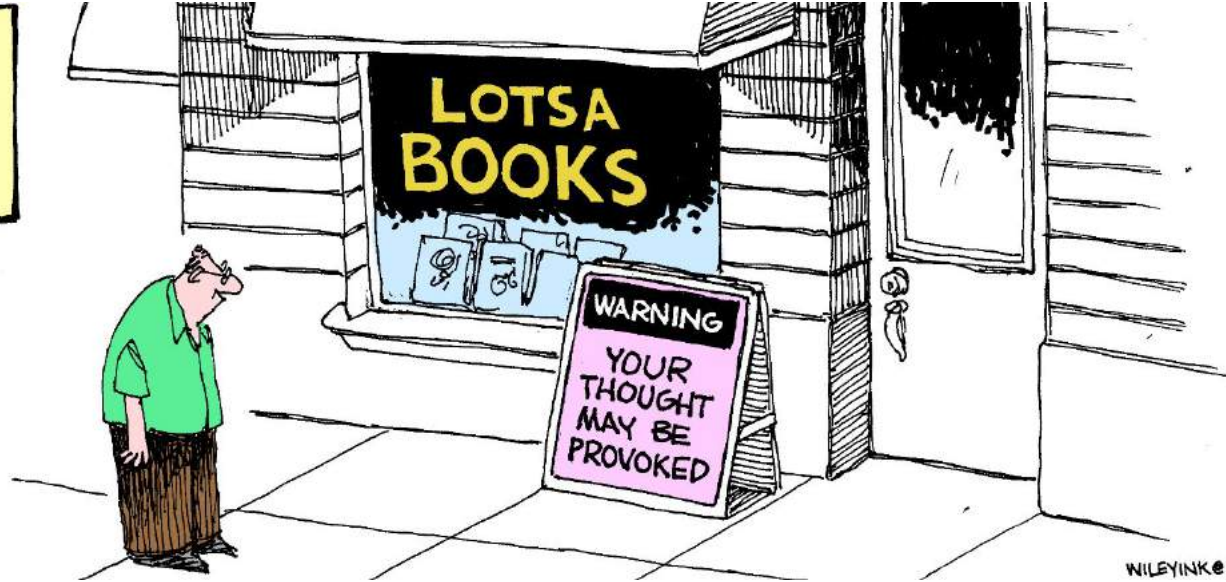
**Jean Slater**  
President,  
Five Cities/Pismo Beach

# What We Will Cover

- What is the Issue?
- What is AAUW California Doing About It?
- What Can YOU Do to Help?
  - Supporting School Board Candidates
    - What is Our Authority?
  - Attending and Speaking Up at School Board Meetings
    - What Do I Say?
    - How Do I Say It?

# What is the Issue?

PRELUDE to  
ANOTHER ROUND  
of BANNING



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# The Problem Nationwide

**350+ Books Banned in Florida School Districts Since Last July**

*Miami New Times, April 25, 2023*

**Texas Senate Passes Bill Removing MLK, Suffrage  
from Required Curriculum**

*TRUTHOUT, July 19, 2021*

**9 States Have Bills Banning Restroom Use by Gender Identity  
19 States Have Bills Banning Participating in Sports by Gender Identity**

*The New York Times*

Published June 5, 2023 Updated June 7, 2023

## Book Bans by the Numbers (June-Dec 2022)

- 21 states
- 66 school districts
- 1,447 books,  
874 Unique Titles

Source: PEN America, April 20 2023





# How Did it Start?

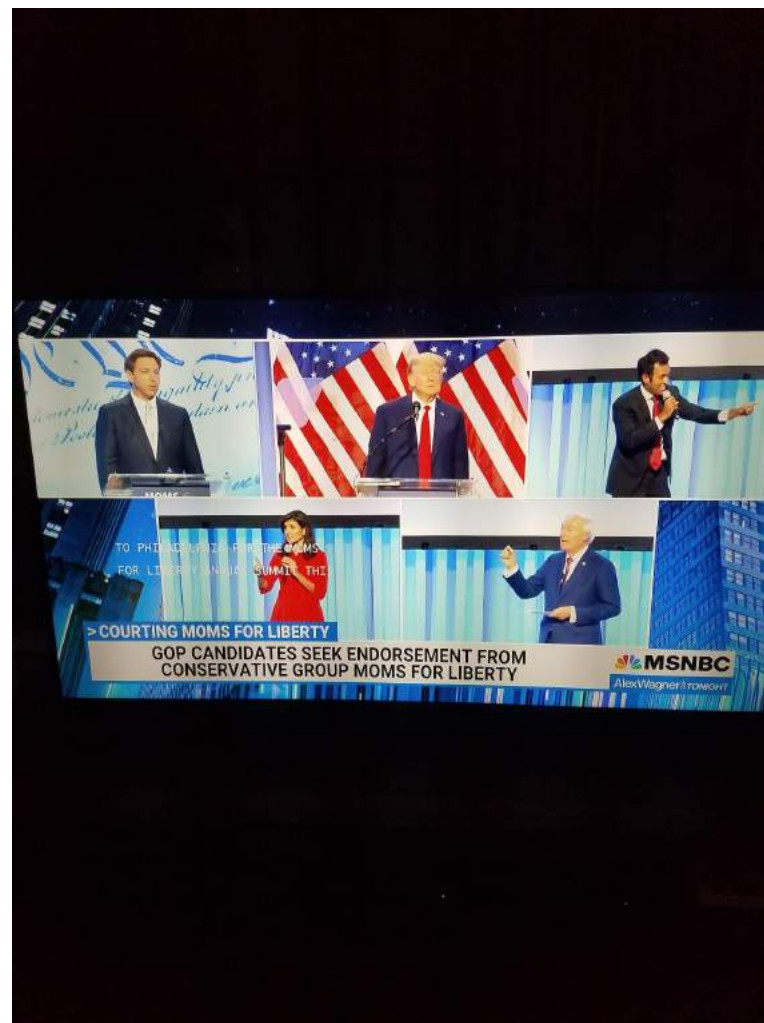


“Since the group’s founding in Florida in 2020, its influence over local and national Republican politics has grown exponentially. It’s now a nationwide movement with 260 chapters that claims to be a “grassroots” group working to protect students and defend parents’ rights. Its members are leading the charge on book-banning campaigns across the country and the group says it has helped install 275 of its favored candidates on school boards in 2022 alone, dozens of whom don’t have any children attending public schools in their districts.”

VICE – David Gilbert, April 26, 2023







# Is it An Issue in California?

Parents rally outside a Glendale Unified School District (GUSD) Board of Education meeting on June 20, 2023 in Glendale, California.

NBC News



TEMECULA SCHOOL BOARD  
MEETING ERUPTS IN CHAOS  
FORCING LAW ENFORCEMENT TO  
STEP IN

“Temecula Valley’s school board’s recent meeting erupted in chaos with parents and teachers screaming while discussing the board’s previous month’s decision to ban a social studies book that talked about gay rights activist Harvey Milk.”

# “Moms for Liberty” Start First California Chapter in San Luis Obispo County

“Locally, a group of moms have joined “Moms for Liberty,” launched in January 2021 by two moms, both school board members, in Florida. This is a non-profit, non-partisan group promoting a return of power to the parents and the freedom to choose in what manner their children will be educated.

There are more than twenty new chapters of “Moms for Liberty” across the country, with the first California chapter right here in San Luis Obispo County. The group is looking for more interested local moms to start subcommittees, attend school board meetings, meet with board members, and work toward getting the word out that parents truly can have a say and a choice in how their children are educated.”

# GOP Seeking Power in State's Schools

## Conservatives target boards, policies across California in the name of “parental rights”

L. A. Times by Laurel Rosenhall, Hannah Wiley and MacKenzie May - August 16, 2023

- Assemblymember Bill Essayli (R-Corona) introduces bill requiring school districts to inform parents if their children use a different gender identity at school from the sex on their birth certificate
  - Failed, but policies have been adopted in Chino and Murrietta School Districts
- Shifting focus to “shape school boards” up and down the state
- Backing “parents’ rights” groups who oppose legislation to:
  - Make it a misdemeanor to harass or threaten a school official
  - Allow the state to fine school districts that refuse to adopt a diversity curriculum
  - Give teachers training in cultural competency on LGBTQ+ issues

# How is California Fighting Back?

June 1, 2023 – Governor Newsom, Attorney General Bonta, and State Superintendent of Schools Tony Thurmond Issue Joint Statement of California Policy:

- I. The Constitution Restricts the Removal of Books From Libraries and Curricula.
- II. Education and Exposure to Various World Views Are Vital for our Youth.
- III. California Education Code Requires Local Educational Agencies to Provide a Representative and Unbiased Curriculum and Protects a Student's Right to Freedom of Speech.



# AB 1078

- Would require the DOE to assess whether the local educational agency has complied with state laws requiring public schools to provide pupils with comprehensive, culturally competent, and accurate instruction about the history, experiences, and viewpoints of people from different communities in California.
- Would require the DOE by July 1, 2025, to develop guidance and public educational materials to ensure that all Californians can access information about educational laws and policies that safeguard the right to an accurate and inclusive curriculum.
- Would reduce a school district's local control funding formula allocation by a specified amount if the Superintendent determines the school district has not provided sufficient textbooks or instructional materials pursuant to these provisions.

# What is AAUW California Doing About It?

- Board has authorized formation of subcommittee of the state Public Policy Committee, called The School Board Project Committee, to:
  - Assess the extent of the issue in CA.
  - Assess the extent of membership concern over the issue.
  - Assess the extent of membership willingness to participate.
  - Provide the Public Policy Committee and state board with recommended courses of action.
- Committee Members
  - Kathi Harper, Chair - member, CA Online
  - Sue Miller - Roseville - member, South Placer
  - Laurinda Ochoa - member, Danville-Alamo-Walnut Creek
  - Seena Trigas - president, COV; member, Fallbrook
  - Ashley Dargert - member, San Jose

# Results of May 2023 Survey

Replies	Branches	Current Issue	Possible Future Issue	Want to Help	Willing to Recruit	Branch Would Endorse	School Board Meetings
83	65 (55%)  95 School Districts	24  18 Yes 6 Maybe	37  11 Yes 26 Maybe	60  27 Yes 33 Maybe	54  23 Yes 31 Maybe	67  37 Yes 30 Maybe	12 Current 25 Future Yes 26 Future Maybe

# Committee Liaison Assignments (IBC/District)

## Sue

- Alameda
- Capital Counties
- Lake Tahoe
- North Valley
- Far North

## Seena

- L.A.
- San Diego County
- Orange County
- Southeast

## Laurinda

- Contra Costa County
- North Coast
- North San Joaquin
- South San Joaquin

## Ashley

- San Francisco-San Mateo Counties
- San Luis Obispo County
- Santa Barbara County
- Santa Clara County
- Ventura County

# Recommended Courses of Action

1. Ask your board to endorse the candidate.
2. Encourage members to identify potential candidates in their districts; submit names to their assigned liaison.
3. SBP member will submit name to appropriate coalition member for financial and training support.
4. Once candidate is accepted for project and has officially declared:
  - a. Encourage members to support campaigns:
    - i. Ask your branch board to endorse the candidate
    - ii. Help introduce candidate to community (Meet & Greet)
    - iii. Flyers
    - iv. Social Media
    - v. Volunteer
5. Encourage members to attend and speak out at school board meetings; report back.





# Why are we Involved?

Approximately 41 percent of banned works feature LGBTQ themes, main characters, or significant supporting characters. Characters of color make up 40 percent of the main or significant secondary characters, while 21 percent of the titles deal with racial and racist topics.

“AAUW believes that high-quality public education is the foundation of a democratic society and the key to improving economic prosperity and gender equality... We support academic freedom, civic education, protection from censorship, [and] bias-free education...”

*from Introduction to AAUW Public Policy Priorities*

“The AAUW California Public Policy Program establishes policy directives that ... are consistent with our values of achieving fair and equitable opportunities for our diverse society ... [including] access to diverse staff and curriculum that represents historically accurate information.”

*from AAUW California Public Policy Priorities 2023-25*

# What is Our Authority?

AAUW Policies and Procedures: 301 CANDIDATES FOR PUBLIC OFFICE

## II. Endorsement of Candidates for Nonpartisan Elective Office

A. A nonpartisan elective office is an office for which party affiliation does not appear on the ballot next to the candidate's name.

B. AAUW affiliates with 501(c)(4) status (the majority of affiliates) may recruit and/or endorse candidates for non-partisan elective offices.

## Two Caveats:

- 1) AAUW affiliates that have independently incorporated themselves as 501(c)(3) entities may not endorse candidates for any kind of elected office.
- 2) Before endorsing candidates for nonpartisan elective office, AAUW state affiliate organizations must carefully investigate state and local election laws.

1. Where state or local election law considers endorsement itself a contribution, AAUW state affiliate organizations may not endorse candidates for any elective office, partisan or nonpartisan.

### NOTE: **CA State FPPC Regulation 18215 (a)**

A contribution is any payment made for political purposes for which a donor does not receive full and adequate consideration.

- Endorsement is not listed as an activity that is considered a contribution.

## IV. AAUW Affiliate's Contributions

- A. AAUW affiliates may not contribute money, mailing lists, or anything of material value to candidates for any elective office, partisan or nonpartisan.
- B. AAUW affiliates may not collectively volunteer time for candidates' activities through an official AAUW affiliate-sponsored activity.
- C. AAUW affiliates may not publish paid or unpaid **partisan** political announcements or advertisements in any AAUW affiliate publication.

Note: Uncompensated messages on social media are not considered contributions (FPPC Reg 18215.2)

# One Final Ask

## Send information on your activities to your assigned liaison!

- Contact with potential candidate, and outcome
  - Name
  - Phone and E-mail
  - Qualifications
- Campaign support activity(ies)
- Attendance at school board meeting(s)
  - Attach School Board Meeting Checklist

And if you haven't taken the survey yet, please do!

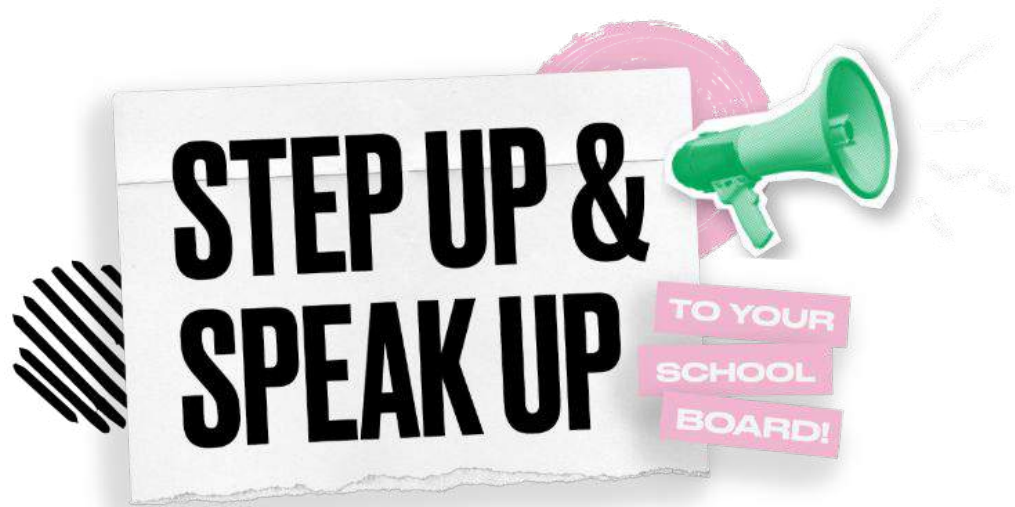


# Questions And Answers



# Standing Up at School Board Meetings

What to Say and How to Say It



# Role Of State/Local Boards Of Education

## California State Board Of Education (SBE)

- Established 1852/placed in state constitution 1884
- Governing and policy-making body for state public education
- Responsible for:
  - Adoption of statewide academic standards for content/student performance
  - Adoption of curriculum frameworks
  - Adoption of instructional materials for K-8
- Informs and guides local development and implementation of specific curricula for K-12 students and serves as the basis for the adoption of instructional materials (California Department of Education)

# Role Of Local School Boards: Instruction

- EC SEC 240: requires governing boards of school districts to adopt instructional materials in accordance with state Education Code (EC)
- Local governing boards shall provide substantial teacher involvement in selecting instructional materials and promote the involvement of parental/community members.
- EC 60119: Boards will hold an annual public hearing and adopt a resolution that each pupil has sufficient textbook and instructional materials in core subjects aligned to *content standards and consistent with the content and cycles of the curriculum framework adopted by the state board of education.*
- Textbooks and instructional materials are reviewed and recommended by the “instructional quality commission,” adopted by the SBE, and are then typically piloted by teachers at the local school district.

# School Boards In California

- Over 5,000 board members; more than 1,000 school districts/county offices of education
- 40% of our state budget supports K-14.
- Districts vary from 20 - 700,000 students.
- Board members (few exceptions) are elected by voters within their school district with no party label.
- California School Boards Association (CSBA) identifies role of board members (partial list):
  1. Overseeing and development of policies (never the implementation)
  2. Employing the superintendent who then hires administrative staff
  3. Setting direction for and adopting curriculum
  4. Establishing budget priorities/adopting the budget
  5. Responsive to the community as a whole
  6. Vision reflecting consensus of the entire board, superintendent, district staff & community as to what students need to achieve highest potential



# CSBA 2019 Governance Brief

“Effective school boards are equity-driven, making intentional governance decisions that combat institutional discrimination and bias (both explicit and implicit) and eliminate disparities in educational outcomes based on socio-economic status, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or family background.”



# 2016 State Framework In History/Social Science

Incorporates new mandates such as the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive And Respectful (Fair) Act for Elementary (K-5); Middle (6-8); High (9-12)

- Completely rewritten to tell a story that reflects the contributions of many diverse groups
- Strongly emphasizes student inquiry, calls on students to conduct research (guided & independent), evaluate primary & secondary sources, develop arguments, & make presentations
- Places a strong emphasis on democratic values in the relations between the citizen and the state
- Encourages teachers to help their students practice the skills of engaged citizenship

# AAUW California: School District Script

- My name is ( ) and I am a resident in this district. My children/grandchildren attend(ed) school in this district (if applicable).
- But today I am speaking on behalf of the **American Association of University Women California**. AAUW supports academic freedom, protection of censorship and bias-free education, as well as access to curriculum that represents historically accurate information.
- According to the California Department of Education: "In California, the State Board of Education decides on the standards for all students..." I point this out to remind you that local school boards do not determine those standards.
- Keeping this in mind, I refer to **Ed. Code sect 51204.5**: requiring Social Science instruction to include the role and contributions of both men and women, members of various races/ethnic groups, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans, persons with disabilities, and members of other ethnic and cultural groups, to the economic, political, and social development of California and the nation."

# AAUW California Script (cont'd)

- Local school boards do not have the right to change or distort how History or Social Sciences are taught in our Public Schools.
- *(Address the specific issue your school board is considering that AAUW California is concerned about)*
- Actions taken by this board would be construed as a violation of a student's first amendment rights, as well as California's constitutional guarantee of the right against discrimination.
- As AAUW members we believe we must have quality public education for all students, free from hate and discrimination. We support academic freedom. We believe all students deserve a factually accurate and bias-free education, and we believe all public schools should be free from political or religious censorship.
- **We urge the board to vote in favor of upholding those rights by voting "no" on the (policy being presented tonight).**

# Board Presentation Skills: Tips for beginners speaking at public meetings

**Arrive early, grab an agenda and speaker card at the door** and find a seat where you will be comfortable in approaching the podium.

**Scan the agenda, fill out the speaker slip** indicating the agenda item number to which you plan to speak. If the subject you want to speak about is **not** on the agenda, **you can still speak about it**, when the board chair asks if anyone wants to speak about an item **Not** on the agenda.

**Turn the speaker slip into the board clerk**, so that your name will be called.

**Find out the display timer.** Typically you will have 3 minutes to speak. Take a second to adjust the microphone to your height, and be sure to speak an inch or so from the microphone. If you are too close it creates static.

**Write out your remarks** and read them if this is most comfortable.

**Address the policy**, not the person.

# Board Presentation Skills (cont'd)

**Be sincere.** Speaking with passion and conviction draws people's attention.

**Watch the clock.** Practice ahead of time so you know you can make your statement in the allotted time.

**Look at some of, or all, of the board members.** This has a great effect. Concentrate on the actual board members as they are the only ones who can make a decision that will affect the issue you care about.

**When dealing with the opposition, realize you aren't going to change their position easily, if at all.**

# Effective Speaking Skills: Presenting Your Case

1. **Use “I” statements.**
2. **Mention an area of similarity or agreement..** Listen for underlying personal values and aspirations and acknowledge them.
3. **Say something about what life experiences have led you to be passionate about this issue.**
4. If you are in a situation where your board members engage speakers in a dialogue, before expressing disagreement, **say some version of “I hear you.” (acknowledgement). I hear you and here’s what I think about this.”** Example: “I understand that you worry about parent concerns and here is what I would suggest.....
5. **(INTENTIONAL PAUSE)** My view is that the school board is entrusted to care for all children and must take in consideration the needs of individual students and students as a whole

# Expectations to Abandon

**You cannot persuade the other person to change core attitudes and beliefs.** We can only change ourselves. When we change ourselves in positive ways, we can increase our ability to influence others.

**Facts will not be agreed on and logic will not be consistently** followed.

**You cannot always assume that what is obvious to you is obvious to everybody else.**

Sometimes **we respond without thinking** when we feel anger or fear, or hear something that validates an existing bias. Take time to think.



# Techniques To Diffuse Tense Situations

Tips to assist when confronted by someone outside of the meeting.

**Start Friendly** “Thank you for telling me your opinion on this subject, issue, etc.”

## Know When/How To Disagree Without Being Disagreeable

- Stay focused on a topic.
- Do not draw out a conversation.
- Avoid apologies.
- Do not answer baited/gotcha questions.
- Do not return provocative statements in kind.
- Avoid admonishments.

# Escalating Situations

**Assess the situation.** Most confrontations are strictly verbal, but depending on the people involved, there may be a potential for violence. Your safety, and the safety of everyone involved, should be the first concern whenever any conflict arises.

- Always trust your gut. If you do not feel comfortable in a given situation, excuse yourself and leave (if possible).
- Do not be afraid to ask for outside help/support.
- Determine whether or not you can safely deal with the person/people initiating the confrontation.
- If you feel that your safety or the safety of those around you is threatened, call the police.

# Escalating Situations (cont'd)

**Leave if you need to.** An important part of any confrontation is being able to recognize when a person cannot be calmed. If you can tell the matter will not be peacefully resolved, you have the right to disengage from the conversation and leave.

- You have the right to be treated with respect, and you have the right to protect yourself from physical, mental, or emotional harm.
- If you feel unsafe or your rights are being violated and you know it will not end well, tell the person you feel unsafe and you need to leave. Then leave the space, and if necessary, call for help.

# Questions And Answers



# References & Resources

**Survey:** <https://forms.gle/fQj7JyBdiLLLwsTC6>

**AAUW California SBP ToolKit:**

**Other organizations doing this work:**

- Equality California: [eqca.org](http://eqca.org)
- California Teachers Association:  
<https://www.cta.org/educator/posts/elections-matter-defending-schools-against-extremists>
- Our Schools USA: <https://www.ourschoolsusa.org/>
- Stop Moms for Liberty: [StopM4L#](https://stopm4l.org/)
- Show Up for Racial Justice: <https://surj.org/current-actions/>

# Organizations Supporting Regressive Candidates

Moms for Liberty | Moms for Liberty

<https://reformcalifornia.org/news/reform-minded-candidates-sought-to-run-for-ca-school-boards-in-2024>



# Reports

<https://pen.org/report/banned-in-the-usa-state-laws-supercharge-book-suppression-in-schools/>

[The Right-Wing Money and Influence Behind Moms for Liberty - LA Progressive](#)

[What Is Critical Race Theory, and Why Is It Under Attack? \(edweek.org\)](#)

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/trans-girls-belong-on-girls-sports-teams/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/article/transgender-athlete-ban.html>

# California Government

<https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Book-Bans-Letter-6.1.23-1.pdf>

Sect'y of State Reference to Local Ordinances (find your city/county):  
[Local Campaign Ordinances](#)

AB 1078: <https://legiscan.com/CA/bill/AB1078/2021>

AB 1266 (8/12/13):

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201320140AB1266](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB1266)

6 (EC Sect 221.5) Requires that a pupil be permitted to participate in sex-segregated school programs and activities, including athletic teams and competitions, and use facilities consistent with his or her gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on the pupil's records.)



# More

## Community Organizing:

<https://redwine.blue/bbb/>

<https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/toolkit/#talking-points>

## Videos:

Moms for Liberty vs. Save Our Schools -

<https://youtu.be/8Bpt4Hu2Qog> - Part 1

<https://youtu.be/aDMDXK9liZo> - Part 2

Satire (Just for fun): <https://youtu.be/BN4cAwlVAGM?si=thDXIRIQwh8a-MP1>

# Give Us Feedback

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Please click Continue to participate in a short survey.**

you will be leaving zoom.us to access the external URL below:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSoggnUviyOhGbk52Rzohatbbs-uf39ujesuT4Vn0qdCFHiwg/formResponse>

Are you sure you want to continue?

Continue

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