

February 2, 2024

Thank you for signing up to receive updates regarding our Save Our Libraries Campaign. You have likely heard that something is happening in Alabama libraries, but may feel a bit lost. We hope that this first email of our campaign will clarify things, and help you know what actions we need to take to save Alabama libraries. If you have any questions, please reach out to us at saveourlibrariesal@gmail.com.

Yesterday, February 1, began a 90-day public comment period on changes that have been proposed for the Alabama Administrative Code. This code is the policy that Alabama public libraries must follow in order to receive state funding. These changes, dictated by Gov. Ivey, have the potential to compel libraries to censor materials for young readers based on conservative ideologies, while also enacting policies to discourage libraries from utilizing American Library Association (ALA) resources in a continued attempt amongst conservatives to paint the ALA as an ideologically biased organization. These changes to the administrative code will have significant, long-lasting consequences for our public libraries and librarians.

Here's what we need to do.

The Alabama Public Library Service (APLS), the governing body for our public libraries, will be collecting public comments during the 90-day period. They must be received by 4:30 pm on April 29, 2024, at the following address:

Alabama Public Library Service
Attn: Vanessa Carr
6030 Monticello Dr.
Montgomery, AL 36117

We are asking for you to write in to reject the administrative code changes. Please consider including the following talking points to do so. You can certainly share personal stories about how you and/or your family will be impacted by censoring materials in the library, but you should center your comments around one or more of the following:

- One of the proposed changes takes the power away from trained librarians and leaves it up to library boards to determine what is classified as inappropriate content for children and young adults. Currently, groups like Moms for Liberty and Clean Up Alabama classify any LGBTQ+ materials, even those without any sexual content, as “sexually explicit and inappropriate for children and young adults.” They also classify racial justice materials as being inappropriate for children and young adults. **Here's what you could say: Libraries already have extensive processes in place to determine where materials should go. There are no sexually explicit or developmentally inappropriate materials in children's sections of our libraries. We should trust our trained librarians to make those decisions.**

- Another proposed change claims that “exercising discretion in the location of materials” that are vaguely deemed “inappropriate for children or youth” is not a discriminatory denial of service. **Here’s what you could say: Code changes regarding the placement of books in the library are redundant to existing policies. This is government overreach and a denial of service based on age.**
- A proposed change requires that any public funds that go to the ALA must be approved by the governing board of the library in an open meeting. The ALA has been singled out because the outgoing president of the association is a socialist and a lesbian. ALA presidents have short-term (one year) appointments, with little actual power over the association. **Here’s what you could say: The singling out of the ALA is government overreach. Using the outgoing ALA president’s sexual orientation and political identification as a socialist to push a conservative political ideology into our libraries is homophobic and reminiscent of McCarthyism. ALA provides important services to our libraries and librarians and shouldn’t be targeted in ways that other library organizations are not.**

You can read the full Administrative Code at:

<https://admincode.legislature.state.al.us/api/filing/658c8e0c5bd0eca294127299/filing>

If you are a current or former library employee, board member, or representative, please reach out to us so that we can share more technical options for your rejection letters. APLS will hold a public hearing at their office in Montgomery; mark your calendars for 10 am on April 30, 2024. We will be hosting several write-in events across north and central Alabama—stay tuned to join us for those! Thank you for standing up for one of our most important public institutions, our libraries.

Solidarity, y’all!

North Alabama Democratic Socialists of America

Birmingham Democratic Socialists of America