



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Press Contact:

Elizabeth Cronen, elizabeth.cronen@oregonlegislature.gov

Senate Democrats Keep School Book Decisions Local and Fair

The Freedom to Read bill says books depicting race, sex, religion, and other groups have to be judged by the same standards as all other books

SALEM, OR – Oregon Senate Democrats voted today to keep decisions on textbooks and library materials under the control of local educators and parents. Out-of-state extremists won't be able to ban books in Oregon under SB 1098, the Freedom to Read bill sponsored by **Senate Education Committee Chair Lew Frederick (D – NE Portland)**.

The bill requires that people filing complaints about a book be connected to the school—parents, guardians, or school employees—not right-wing activists from Florida. The decision on whether a book stays or goes must come from a committee that is local.

Under the measure, a book cannot be banned simply for having content on a certain race, sex, religion, or other group protected by law in Oregon. Challenges and decisions must be in writing, and decisions must include the reasoning. Parents and guardians still can request removal of materials, and school boards and staff can still make their decisions by considering a reader's age, book's vulgarity, and the material's educational value.

For example, a local committee could decide to remove or restrict a book based on violent content or poor educational value. But the committee can't reject a violent book depicting one religion and keep a similarly violent book depicting a different religion when it gets challenged.

"Discriminatory book bans in schools—and the censorship that goes along with them—undermine Oregon values, and prevent students from learning about the history, experiences, and viewpoints of all communities," said **Senator Frederick**.

Last year 127 titles were challenged in Oregon schools and libraries, the greatest number since the State Library began tracking the figure.

The vote on the Oregon Senate floor was 18 to 10. The measure goes next to the Oregon House of Representatives for consideration.

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