

## Free Expression Work

### Q1 Update

FY 2024 (October 1, 2023–December 31, 2023)

*Last updated 01/10/2024*

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**ABFE's Free Expression Work (based on Ends Policy 1(a)<sup>1</sup> and [as of 12/31/2023] Ends Policy 4.<sup>2</sup>)**

### Q1 Update

#### Federal Advocacy

- **Met with Matt Nosanchuk**, Education Department (Office for Civil Rights) Deputy Assistant Secretary and “book czar.” Represented the place of booksellers in the fight against book bans, provided a copy of the Right to Read Toolkit, and planned future programming to explain how the OCR can help booksellers fight censorship.
- **Subsequently, held a webinar** with Matt Nosanchuk for our members to explain the role of the Education Department’s Office for Civil Rights and how and when they take action. There were 110 registrants for the event and 60+ attendees.

#### Legal Challenges

- **Kept our members abreast of developments** in our cases against TX HB 900 and AR Act 372.
- **Supplied Media Coalition and counsel with information** from our members about loss of revenue and other negative impacts of relevant legislation.
- **Formed a group to fund and write an amicus brief** in 2024 to support legal challenges to IA SF 496, a combination book ban/Don’t Say Gay law that would ban instructional material that included a description of a sex act, regardless of context or literary merit.
- **Advised Media Coalition** on book ban legislation being introduced for 2024.

#### Social Media

- **Launched social media accounts** for ABFE on Instagram, Facebook, and X.
- **Followers** on each as of 12/31/23: Instagram (271), X (64), Facebook (63)
- **Engagement** on Instagram is exceptionally high, an average of 18.8%. Social media marketers set average engagement rates on average between 1% and 5%.
- **Launched three campaigns**, including Free Expression Fridays collaborating with free expression advocates; This Week in Book Challenges, covering every challenge in the news that week across the US; and Making Sense of Censorship, visual education pieces exploring trends and prevalent issues in book challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> “1(a). Core members have the resources in support of their right to freedom of expression.”

<sup>2</sup> “4. Legal and regulatory policies reflect the interests of independent bookstores in such areas as antitrust action and small business assistance.”

- **Social media collaborations** include: The Good Books Young Troublemakers book club; Villanova's Theater Program on their Banned Books performance; Christina Gagnier, CEO of Our Schools USA, on their anti-book ban advocacy; and The Nonbinarian Book Bike Instagram takeover.
- **Growth strategies:** Collaborations and making shareable content (visual, bookish, a touch sassy) have been the most successful growth strategies.

### Fundraising

- **Set up new crowdfunding support** on FundraiseUp to enable fundraising from nonmembers, raising over \$2,000 in Q1 to support our advocacy.
- **Donors** included banned authors, social media followers, booksellers who dedicated their gift wrapping donations, and a book industry organization who gave to ABFE as a holiday gift from employees.

### Banned Books Week

- **Held Banned Books Week Instagram Display Contest**, featuring displays from every region and judged by regional EDs. One Children's Institute scholarship was awarded in addition to several t-shirts.
- **Celebrated Banned Books Week on the road** at fall regional shows, where we raised awareness about banned books, publicized the Right to Read Toolkit, and heard from members about book bans in their area.

**Online harassment support** for several booksellers who faced coordinated attacks during and around Banned Books Week.

**Direct advocacy on behalf of two members** facing content-based discrimination from local governments in Marietta, GA and Deerfield Beach, FL.

**Advised local organizers** who reached out to ABFE in Oregon, Texas, Virginia, and Massachusetts.

### Call and Letter Campaigns

- Circulated petition condemning book bans nationally.
- Circulated petition condemning Charlotte County, FL book bans specifically.
- Asked Pennsylvania followers to tell their representatives to vote no on PA SB 7, a bill that would de facto ban books with "sexual content" unless parents opt in.

### Collaborations with allies:

- Reviewed and signed onto 8 letters by NCAC's Kids' Right to Read Project.
- Advised KRRP on book challenges and challenge-friendly policies based on our findings in Curate.
- In October, discussed possible collaborations with Red Wine & Blue, a national progressive parents association resisting book bans.

- In November, met with Libro.fm about possible 2024 collaborations on banned books; spoke with a coalition including AAP and Big 5 publisher staff about a banned books sales campaign.
- In December, met with Skip Dye and others in the Banned Books Taskforce at Penguin Random House to discuss legal support for their challenge to Iowa SF 496 and ways we can collaborate in 2024. Advised the National Black Arts Foundation on their “Blacklisted!” mini-conference and book fair, connecting them to SIBA to ensure ABA members are involved in the book fair.