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Illinois first state to protect book access

By **PETER HANCOCK**
Capitol News Illinois
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Gov. JB Pritzker signed legislation Monday that seeks to protect public and school libraries from pressure to ban, remove or restrict access to books based on "partisan or doctrinal disapproval."

Speaking at the Harold Washington Library Center in downtown Chicago, Pritzker said there were 67 attempts in 2022 to have various books removed from library shelves in Illinois, including books about LGBTQ-plus youths, the Black experience and racism.

"The argument for banning books always begins with the claim that it's about protecting the children, and yes, of course, we all want to protect our children so they're reading age-appropriate material," he said. "But banning books from libraries isn't about that at all. Book bans are about censorship, marginalizing people, marginalizing ideas and facts. Regimes ban books, not democracies."

House Bill 2789 declares it to be the policy of Illinois to "encourage and protect the freedom of libraries and library systems to acquire materials without external limitation and to be protected against attempts to ban, remove, or otherwise restrict access to books or other materials."

It also requires that, as a condition for being eligible for state grants, libraries and library systems must adopt either the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights or some other written statement prohibiting the practice of banning books or other materials.

Tracie Hall, executive director of the Chicago-based ALA, called the bill signing a historic event.

"I could not be prouder that the American Library Association ... makes its home in a state that is first in the nation to create a law that stands up to censorship and calls it what it is - a threat to education, to libraries, to our individual freedoms, and a threat to our democracy," she said.

The bill was an initiative of Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias, who serves as the

state librarian and whose office administers grant programs for local public libraries and school libraries. He described it as the first of its kind in the United States and a needed response to a growing wave of antagonism toward libraries.

"Most of the premise of this bill and our inspiration for this bill was hearing from librarians throughout the state who have never seen a level of intimidation, threats to violence and job insecurity like they have across the state, whether it's in the western suburbs or whether it's in downstate Illinois. So that's been really troubling," he said. "We should be applauding them, and they've never felt this harassed. So hopefully this shows librarians across the state that we support them."

The bill passed through both chambers of the General Assembly with only Democratic support. Republicans argued that it undercut the authority of local library boards and school boards. Some also argued that it could lead to unintended consequences such as libraries being forced to carry books espousing racism or providing instructions in how to make a bomb.

"That's got nothing to do with this legislation," Giannoulias said when asked about this criticism on Monday. "What we're saying simply is a book cannot be removed that's already currently in circulation for partisan or doctrinal beliefs. ... Our librarians have begged for this legislation."

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Students

From page 1

Award for his PSAT and SAT scores, National Honor Society, 3 years; AFS, 4 years; FFA, 3 years; Baseball, 2 years, Basketball, 3 years; Football, 4 years (selected as captain senior year); Received MVP, Most Valuable Skill Player, and Most Valuable Defensive Back, selected as Unanimous 1st Team Wide Receiver, and 1st Team Defensive Back for



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Lincoln Prairie Conference, and News-Gazette All-Area Second Team for Wide Receiver.

When asked who inspires him in his pursuit of excellence, "My parents, they have always pushed me to be my best and have always supported me in anything I've wanted to do." Austin plans on going to EIU to further his education. "I'm not currently 100% decided on what major I want to pursue; however, I'm looking into civil engineering or a career in the medical field, as a Physician Assistant or Nurse Practitioner."

Makenna Jo Wagoner is the daughter of Jodi Jewell and Steve Wagoner. She has 6 siblings, Alec, Gracie, Andrew, Carson, Maxwell, and Avery and has lived in Arcola for 18 years. During her senior year she has taken courses in Art I, PE (advanced), Food Prep, Psychology, Calculus, Dual Credit Art Appreciation, Dual Credit English 101, Dual Credit Sociology. Makenna's

favorite subject is, "Math because it always comes easy to me. I also enjoy working towards a definite answer every time. She has been on the Straight A Honor Roll all 4 years of High School. Makenna participates in Volleyball, Cheer, Softball, Student Council, National Honors Society, AFS and has earned the Softball Hustle Award (2021) & Softball Rider Heart Award (2022).

When asked who inspires her in her pursuit of excellence, Wagoner stated, "My Papa Louis was someone I always looked up to. He faced a lot of challenges and obstacles during his lifetime, but always kept a good attitude and persevered through it all. I really admire these qualities he had, and I hope I am able to possess these qualities as I grow too." Makenna plans on attending Parkland College starting this Fall. "I am unsure what major I would like to pursue, or where I would like to transfer to after Parkland."




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