



MICHIGAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Press Release

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New Poll on Book Banning and Censorship at Michigan Public Libraries*

**800 Sample Live Operator Statewide Survey conducted March 23 to March 30, 2023.*

Included 70% cell phone only respondents - Margin of Error 3.5 points.

Lansing, MI – In a newly released poll of Michigan voters by EPIC-MRA commissioned by the Michigan Library Association (MLA), 800 voters responded regarding awareness of, and attitudes toward, the increasingly intense and coordinated efforts to dictate the collection content of local public libraries. EPIC-MRA produced a statewide summary as well as 11 regional summaries based on the Michigan Cooperative Library regions. Overall findings: Groups and organizations that favor banning books in Michigan are *clearly* going against an overwhelming majority of public opinion that opposes book banning.

Bernie Porn, President of EPIC-MRA, said that “a small minority who are trying to ban books are cynically attempting to limit as much as possible the teaching of history, especially books discussing slavery, race, political ideas they disagree with, criticisms of people and events in U.S. history, and discussions about sex, gender identity or sexual orientation. About 9-in-10 voters say books on these topics should never be banned, with 2-in-3 saying the same thing about books dealing with sexual content.”

“We have always known that most voters and parents hold librarians in high regard, have confidence in their public libraries to make good decisions about what books to include in their collections, and agree that libraries in their communities do a good job offering books that represent a variety of viewpoints,” said Scott Duimstra, MLA’s Board President and director at the Capital Area District Libraries in Lansing. “We now have specific Michigan data to back this up.”

Here in Michigan the findings show:

A 71% solid majority of all respondents gave local public libraries in Michigan – including their local public library – a positive rating for the job they are doing providing programs, services and a diverse, quality collection of books and other materials to their library patrons (34% excellent), with only 8% giving libraries a negative rating (3% poor), and 21% “undecided.” A 79% majority of Democrats, 68% of Independents and 65% of Republicans offer a positive job rating.

An 83% majority of all respondents would support state legislation that would protect the right of the public to read what they wish to read in local public libraries and not have books banned. This includes 95% of Democrats, 89% of Independents and 70% of Republicans.

A 70% majority of all respondents said that librarians are very capable (33%) or mostly capable (37%) and trustworthy to decide which books and reading materials should be included in your local library collections. Another 18% said librarians are only a little capable (12%) or not really capable at all (6%) in deciding what books and reading materials should comprise the collection, with 12% undecided. This includes 85% of Democrats, 67% of Independents and 57% of Republicans.

A 42% plurality of all respondents agreed that “there is absolutely no time when a book should be banned from local public libraries,” 45% said “there are rare times when it may be appropriate to ban books from local public libraries,” with 9% saying “there are many inappropriate books that should be banned from local public libraries.” A 57% majority of Democrats, a 46% plurality of Independents and 27% of Republicans say books should never be banned, with another 40% of Democrats, 47% of Independents and 49% of Republicans saying books should rarely be banned.

67% of all respondents said that “books with discussions about sex, gender identity or sexual orientation” should never be banned, with 21% saying they should sometimes be banned and 9% saying they should always be banned. An 86% majority of Democrats, 76% of Independents and 46% of Republicans said these books should never be banned.

A 75% solid majority of all respondents said they agree the most that “we need to protect the ability of young people to have access to books from which they can learn about and understand different perspectives and help them grow into adults who can think for themselves,” while only 17% agreed that “we need to protect young people from books that they might find upsetting or that reflect ideologies and lifestyles that are outside of the mainstream.” A 93% majority of Democrats, 81% of Independents and 56% of Republicans agree.

An 80% overwhelming majority of all respondents agreed with the statement that “individual parents can set rules for their own children, but they do not have the right to decide for other parents what books are available to their children,” with 15% agreeing that “parents have a right NOT to have their children exposed to objectional books at the library and should be able

to join with other parents to have those books removed from the library.” This includes 94% of Democrats, 86% of Independents and 64% of Republicans.

A 77% solid majority of all respondents agreed that “local public libraries should have a diverse collection of books and reading materials that represents the community and the world around us,” while only 15% agree that “anyone who opposes objectional material is just pushing a woke ideology that is trying to indoctrinate our children with ideas about LGBTQ, transgender youth and promoting lifestyles that they should not be exposed to.” This includes 92% of Democrats, 83% of Independents and 60% of Republicans.

Finally, a 57% majority of voters said that they are less likely to vote for their member of Congress, State Senator or State Representative in the next election if they support legislation that would allow or require books to be banned from their local public library (38% would be much less likely). This includes 81% majority of Democrats, 58% of Independents and 36% of Republicans.

“The results of this public opinion poll further validate our position to protect Michiganders’ First Amendment rights and the right to read,” stated Deborah E. Mikula, MLA’s Executive Director. “This study provides factual information as well as confirms the significance that MLA is morally and justly on the right side of upholding the constitutional promise to protect intellectual freedom.”

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The Michigan Library Association (MLA) is Michigan's oldest and largest library association. Since 1891, MLA has led the advancement of all Michigan libraries through advocacy, education, and engagement. MLA's membership is comprised of individual and organizational members from public, academic, school, tribal, and special libraries. For more information visit milibraries.org.

EPIC-MRA is a full-service survey research firm with expertise in Public Opinion Surveys and Market Research Studies. EPIC-MRA has a proven track record of producing accurate and useful research data based on public perceptions and opinions.