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March 18, 2024

Dear Hanover County School Board,

Vet Voice Foundation, a nonpartisan veterans organization representing over 1.5 million veterans and military family members, is deeply alarmed by the attempts to ban books in Virginia's schools and libraries. This letter is both a forceful condemnation of these actions and a rallying cry for the defense of our foundational freedoms.

As service members, we pledged our lives to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. This oath is sacrosanct, embodying our dedication to the liberties that have long set our nation apart, including the freedom of speech and the unfettered right to access information. When books are banned, and voices are silenced, it is not just an attack on these rights but a direct affront to the very essence of democracy and the freedoms for which we, as veterans, have served to protect.

It is with this backdrop of commitment to our democratic ideals that we express our unyielding support for the Virginia Library Association (VLA) and the Virginia Association of School Librarians (VAASL). Libraries are bastions of knowledge, understanding, and community. They stand as vibrant testaments to the power of free thought and the importance of accessible information. VLA and VAASL's efforts to combat censorship and uphold the public's right to a diverse and rich tapestry of literature align with the highest ideals of our nation and the principles we have vowed to defend.

The attempts to impose book bans within our educational institutions and libraries not only contravene the Constitution but also threaten to impoverish the intellectual and moral fabric of our society. Such acts of censorship deny our youth the broad spectrum of ideas and perspectives essential for critical thinking, empathy, and informed citizenship. In the face of global challenges, it is imperative that we equip future generations with the capacity to engage with complex issues, to understand diverse viewpoints, and to foster an environment of tolerance and dialogue.

We at Vet Voice Foundation stand in solidarity with the VLA and VAASL in their shared mission to protect and promote the freedom to read. We implore you, our elected officials and community leaders, to join us in this endeavor. Together, we must reject censorship and affirm our commitment to the liberties that define our American way of life.



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The price of freedom is eternal vigilance. Veterans have borne the weight of this truth through their service and sacrifices. Now, we must all shoulder the responsibility to defend the freedoms enshrined in our Constitution against any threats, however they may manifest. Supporting the VLA and VAASL and opposing book bans is not just a matter of policy but a profound commitment to our democratic principles and the legacy of those who have served.

I urge you to take a definitive stand against book bans and to publicly affirm your support for the invaluable work of the VLA and VAASL. Together, you can ensure that Virginia remains a state where the light of knowledge, freedom, and democracy shines brightly for all.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Janessa Goldbeck

United States Marine Corps Veteran

CEO, Vet Voice Foundation