



Here's what's happening with our right to read:

Chapter 24 May 26, 2026

[Join the Coalition Today!](#)

The Right to Read coalition's purpose is to support Missouri's libraries as valuable and critical resources for the communities they serve. **We are disappointed that the Missouri Legislature made significant, harmful funding cuts to libraries** in the state's budget for the fiscal year which begins July 1. See below for details.

Missouri Slashes Library Funding in Half

Libraries across Missouri will receive half of the funding provided by the state in Fiscal Year 2027 compared to the previous year (\$1.65 million in FY 2027 compared to \$3.3 million the prior year).

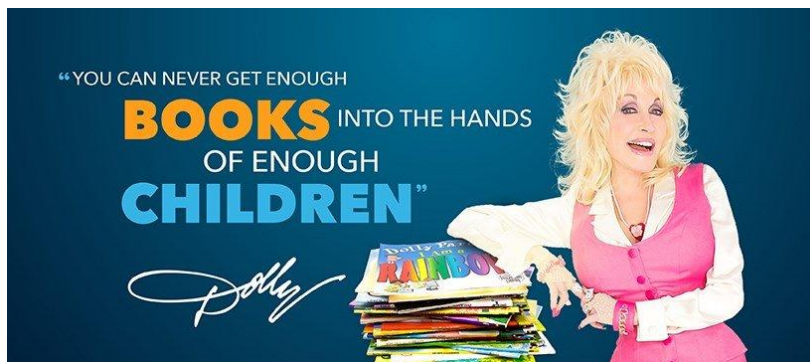
In the current Fiscal Year (ending June 30), state funding has been used by 151 libraries across Missouri to purchase books, audio and video resources, magazines and other materials; this funding is critical to libraries' ability to provide current materials to the public.

The 50 percent reduction for libraries in FY 2027 (beginning July 1, 2026) will have a significant impact on Missouri's libraries, particularly those in small towns and rural areas; they rely on state funding for a greater percentage of their budgets than larger, urban area libraries.

Missouri Cuts Funding for Dolly Parton's Free Book Program for Preschoolers

State funding for Dolly Parton's [Imagination Library](#) will be cut by more than 50 percent, from \$6 million to \$2 million in the Fiscal 2027 year.

Representatives from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Imagination Library say the program is unlikely to continue statewide.



The Imagination Library, which sends free books monthly to children under age 5, is administered by school districts as local partners, with no cost

to schools for books or postage.

In 2025, 168,188 children were enrolled; cost per child is about \$26 annually. Since the partnership began, 4.3 million books have been donated to Missouri kids.

Missouri announced a statewide partnership with the Imagination Library in 2023 and a commitment to fully fund the program moving forward.

Who Wants Book Bans? Not Parents.



The American Library Association (ALA) reported 4,235 unique titles challenged in 2025, the **second-highest number of book challenges on record**. Here are the [11 most challenged books of 2025](#), according to the ALA. Approximately 40% of challenged books represented LGBTQIA+ experiences or the experiences of people of color. Notably, **92% of challenges were initiated by pressure groups, government officials, or decision makers, rather than individual parents.**

Boosting Literacy Rates Among Black Children

Keyon Watkins reads books to children every week at the Carr Square neighborhood school in St. Louis. It is part of the Page Turner Program, organized by his literary organization, [Black Men Read](#)



“What it's really about is just the access, and when kids have access to books, that's powerful,” Watkins said. “We introduce them to the books, so the goal is for them to take the books home, interact with their parents, do activities like book reports, go to the library and check out books.”

Please let us know about literacy programs in your community so we can include them in future newsletters. E-mail us at righttoreadcoalition@gmail.com.

Librarian Fired: “We Stand with Luanne”

In a suburb near Nashville, Rutherford County Library Director Luanne James was ordered to transfer over 130 children’s books to the adult section because they had been identified as promoting “gender confusion” in kids. **The National Coalition Against Censorship calls this “a sinister euphemism to ban books that include LGBTQ+ representation.”**

Members of the library board voted overwhelmingly to terminate Luanne’s employment. She was escorted from the room by a sheriff’s deputy as chaos broke out, and a wave of cheers, boos, and chants of “we stand with Luanne” rained down.



Max Cumming, NCAC Program Associate & Video Producer spoke with Luanne’s supporters and opponents. He documented their opinions and filmed the meeting.

Advocates opposed to the removal of library books attend a meeting of the Rutherford County Library Board in Murfreesboro, Tenn., on March 30, 2026.

Censorship is often quiet or comes as a surprise, so it's unusual to capture what it looks like in real time. [See video of the board meeting](#)

The [Rutherford County Library Alliance](#) has actively opposed censorship. Like the Missouri Right to Read coalition, this alliance is a member of the NCAC "Right to Read Network."



Censorship Spurs Librarians to Run for Office

Several librarians across the US are running for state office. Last year, India May shared her story of going from quiet librarian to loud force in

Iowa's legislature.

May was spurred into action following a slate of anti-library bills that floated through the state legislature in 2025. [Learn more about May and other librarians running for office](#)

Get Your Banned Book at a Free Little Library!



Free Little Libraries in neighborhoods across America are a great, accessible way to promote reading. Some have banned books!

