

Thune	Tuberville	Wicker
Tillis	Vance	Young

NOT VOTING—2

Capito	Mullin
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE RELATING TO "IMPORTATION OF FRESH BEEF FROM PARAGUAY"

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session for the consideration of S.J. Res. 62, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 62) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service relating to "Importation of Fresh Beef From Paraguay".

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to proceed is agreed to.

The joint resolution was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The joint resolution having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the joint resolution pass?

Mr. KAINE. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY), the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLIN), and the Senator from Missouri (Mr. SCHMITT).

The result was announced—yeas 70, nays 25, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 101 Leg.]

YEAS—70

Baldwin	Cornyn	Graham
Barraso	Cortez Masto	Grassley
Blackburn	Cotton	Hassan
Blumenthal	Cramer	Hawley
Boozman	Crapo	Hickenlooper
Braun	Cruz	Hirono
Britt	Daines	Hooven
Brown	Ernst	Hyde-Smith
Budd	Fetterman	Johnson
Cantwell	Fischer	Kennedy
Collins	Gillibrand	King

Klobuchar	Reed	Smith
Lankford	Ricketts	Tester
Lummis	Risch	Thune
Manchin	Romney	Tillis
Marshall	Rosen	Tuberville
McConnell	Rounds	Vance
Merkley	Rubio	Warren
Moran	Sanders	Whitehouse
Murkowski	Schatz	Wicker
Murray	Schumer	Wyden
Ossoff	Scott (FL)	Young
Padilla	Scott (SC)	
Peters	Sinema	

NAYS—25

Bennet	Durbin	Shaheen
Booker	Heinrich	Stabenow
Butler	Kaine	Sullivan
Cardin	Kelly	Van Hollen
Carper	Lujan	Warner
Casey	Markey	Warnock
Cassidy	Menendez	Welch
Coons	Murphy	
Duckworth	Paul	

NOT VOTING—5

Capito	Lee	Schmitt
Hagerty	Mullin	

The joint resolution (S.J. Res. 62) was passed, as follows:

S.J. RES. 62

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Congress disapproves the rule submitted by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service relating to "Importation of Fresh Beef From Paraguay" (88 Fed. Reg. 77883 (November 14, 2023)), and such rule shall have no force or effect.

(Mr. BOOKER assumed the Chair.)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FETTERMAN). Under the previous order, the Senate will resume executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Leon Schydlower, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Texas.

Ms. BUTLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Ms. BUTLER. Mr. President, today, I rise to honor Women's History Month and to once again bring attention to the destructive practice of book banning taking place all across our Nation.

At this time, I am also going to be joined by my esteemed colleague, Senator TINA SMITH from Minnesota.

Our Nation's literature serves as a mirror, a window, and a door to endless possibilities, fueling our imagination, fostering empathy, and challenging us to think critically about our beliefs and values. To many young Americans, opening a book with characters who resemble them and their lived experiences is the very essence of our Nation's commitment to freedom of thought. These stories highlight the voices of everyday Americans who often go unheard.

Let me put the horrors of these book bans in context. PEN America provides a comprehensive overview of the increase in book bans across U.S. schools during the 2021 to 2022 school year. It reveals a significant rise in instances of censorship, with over 2,500 cases affecting nearly 1,650 unique titles. Most of these bans are driven by organized groups targeting books that explore LGBTQ+ themes and racial issues.

Adding on to this, in 2022, the American Library Association documented 1,269 demands to censor library books and resources, marking the highest number of attempted book bans in over 20 years and nearly doubling the count from 2021. A significant 38-percent increase was observed in the number of unique titles targeted, with the majority concerning LGBTQIA+ topics or authored by individuals from diverse racial backgrounds.

The worst part is that these challenges are increasingly initiated by groups rather than individuals, with a shift toward targeting multiple titles at once. It is the new veneer by which historical revisionists intend to erode the history of our people.

I am all but obligated to ensure that all forms of expression remain unrestrained. Just as rivers carve the landscapes of America, literature has the profound capacity to shape the minds and lives of America's youth. These stories flow through their consciousness, eroding old biases, watering seeds of new ideas, and guiding them along the path of self-discovery. In navigating these waters, young people learn to understand and embrace their identities, recognize their place in a larger narrative, and appreciate the diversity of the human experience.

Literature, in its boundless forms, acts as a river—constantly moving, shaping, and transforming the selfhood of our youth, guiding them toward the vast ocean of their potential.

Growing up in rural Mississippi and as the descendant of sharecroppers, my journey echoes the narratives of resilience and perseverance that are deeply rooted in American history, and so I found solace reading the words of the great Maya Angelou—one of our Nation's quintessential civil rights leaders and one of its most prolific writers. With her profound literary and societal contributions, Angelou left an indelible mark across America.

Angelou's voice, particularly through her autobiography "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," offers deep insights into the human condition, advocating for civil rights and female empowerment. Yet, proponents of book banning do not believe that her story and her perspective have a place in our national narrative.

"I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" is set against the backdrop of the rural South, providing a poignant exploration of Angelou's own experiences growing up as a Black girl in America during the Great Depression of the 1930s and 1940s. Her words encapsulate the essence of American beauty.

It is not just the triumphs but also the struggles that shape us, guiding our paths to becoming who we are meant to be. “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” is a testament to the human spirit’s capacity for resilience, for transformation, and for triumph over adversity, making it a timeless and essential piece of literature. Every child in this Nation should have the opportunity to read it if they are truly to understand the history of the United States.

In her writing, Maya Angelou offers:

Without willing it, I had gone from being ignorant of being ignorant to being aware of being aware. And the worst part of my awareness was that I didn’t know what I was aware of. I knew very little, but I was certain that the things I had yet to learn wouldn’t be taught to me at George Washington High School. I began to cut classes, to walk in Golden Gate Park or wander along the shiny counter of the Emporium Department Store. When Mother discovered that I was playing truant, she told me that if I didn’t want to go to school one day, if there were no tests being held, and if my school work was up to standard, all I had to do was tell her and I could stay home. She said that she didn’t want some white woman calling her up to tell her something about her child that she didn’t know. And she didn’t want to be put in the position of lying to a white woman because I wasn’t woman enough to speak up. That put an end to my truancy, but nothing appeared to lighten the long gloomy day that going to school became. To be left alone on the tightrope of youthful unknowing is to experience the excruciating beauty of full freedom and the threat of eternal indecision.

Few, if any, survive their teens. Most surrender to the vague but murderous pressure of adult conformity. It becomes easier to die and avoid conflicts than to maintain a constant battle with the superior forces of maturity. Until recently each generation found it more expedient to plead guilty to the charge of being young and ignorant, easier to take the punishment meted out by the older generation (which had itself confessed to the same crime short years before).

The command to grow up at once was more bearable than the faceless horror of wavering purpose, which was youth. The bright hours when the young rebelled against the descending sun had to give way to twenty-four-hour periods called “days” that were named as well as numbered. The Black female is assaulted in her tender years by all those common forces of nature at the same time that she is caught in the tripartite crossfire of masculine prejudice, white illogical hate and Black lack of power. The fact that the adult American Negro female emerges a formidable character is often met with amazement, distaste, and even belligerence. It is seldom accepted as an inevitable outcome of the struggle won by survivors and deserves respect if not enthusiastic acceptance.

To those advancing the banning of books, I ask you to pause and reflect on a moment when a book truly spoke to you. Let that memory guide you to understand the power of literature, not just as a mirror of society but as a builder of empathy and understanding across diverse experiences. Consider the richness these narratives bring to our collective understanding and the importance of keeping that diversity accessible for all.

Literature, like rivers carving landscape, shapes the minds and lives of

our youth, guiding them toward self-discovery and empowering them to embrace their identities.

Maya Angelou’s work exemplifies the resilience and strength of marginalized communities—of the community of Black women—offering profound insights into the human experience.

I urge my colleagues to reflect on the transformative power of literature and to join me on the Senate floor to read an excerpt from a banned book that changed their lives but has since been banned from the lives of others.

May we continue to strive for a future where every voice is heard and every story is valued. May America read freely.

Now I turn to my colleague, Senator SMITH from Minnesota.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak out about the absurd book bannings that are happening in schools across our country. I want to thank Senator BUTLER for inviting me to speak today about this issue.

You know, I was reflecting, as I was listening to Senator BUTLER speak in the beginning, about what reading meant to me when I was a young person and when I was first understanding what it felt like to be immersed in a book that I loved—that feeling of learning, of being able to imagine myself living different lives, being able to think about what different experiences would be like, and understanding that my life was not everybody’s life, that there is such diversity of life in this world, and being exposed to that through reading was so exciting to me.

Also, as I was seeing how I was not like everybody else, I was also able to see myself in the people whom I read about—both my own struggles as well as triumphs in the stories that I read—and that is the gift of reading. So to think about the absurdity of trying to block that gift from people because of one’s own views about what is OK and what is not OK is, I think, what is at issue here.

So I appreciate very much having the opportunity to read into the RECORD incredible authors whose works have been unfairly banned.

To my colleagues, I think it is interesting that, just last week, the American Library Association released new data documenting how prevalent this is. They are documenting book challenges that are happening throughout the United States, and they found a huge surge in these challenges—a 65-percent increase in challenges to books just in 2023. It is the highest level the ALA has ever recorded.

Among the books that were banned last year is a book called “And Tango Makes Three.” This is a book by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell. It is a demonstration of the absurdity of banning books—this book in particular. It is based on the real story of two penguins in the Central Park Zoo who create a family and raise a chick together.

Both of these penguins were male, and so a Florida school district banned the book because of their State’s “don’t say gay” law. Now I am going to read a bit of the text because I think it shows so much. Here we go.

[C]hildren and their parents aren’t the only families at the zoo. The animals make families of their own. There are red panda bear families, with mothers and fathers and furry red panda bear cubs. There are monkey dads and monkey moms raising noisy monkey babies. There are toad families, and toucan families, and cotton-top tamarin families too.

And in the penguin house there are penguin families. Every year at the very same time, the girl penguins start noticing the boy penguins. And the boy penguins start noticing the girls. When the right girl and the right boy find each other, they become a couple.

Two penguins in the penguin house were a little bit different. One was named Roy, the other was named Silo. Roy and Silo were both boys. But they did everything together.

They bowed to each other. And they walked together. They sang to each other. And [they] swam together.

They didn’t spend much time with the girl penguins, and the girl penguins didn’t spend much time with them. Instead, Roy and Silo wound their necks around each other. Their keeper Mr. Gramzay noticed the two penguins and thought to himself, “They must be in love.”

Now, I have four grandchildren, and I think that reading a story like this to them—reading this story to them—is exactly what should be happening as children and people of all ages really think about what it means to love one another, what it means to be a family, and how we can come together in that idea rather than being driven apart.

I hope and will do everything I can to make sure that my four grandchildren live in a future where books that affirm that families can come in all different forms and in all different shapes and sizes aren’t considered worth banning.

I thank Senator BUTLER for organizing this discussion.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to use a prop during my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNIZING THE INDIANS OF MILAN HIGH 1954 BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, you might be surprised by the guest book of a museum in a small town in Indiana. Inside it are names of visitors from all 50 States and from much farther away—other countries, other continents, places like Italy, France, Japan, and New Zealand.

They have made their way to Milan—Milan, IN. And they have done so because here is where the heart of Hoosier Hysteria lives. It is the greatest basketball story ever that has taken place. It happened there 70 years ago this week, March 20, 1954, at the Fieldhouse on the campus of Butler University in Indianapolis: the finals of the