

Submitter: Jon French  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB1583

I'm writing to support the passage of SB 1583, which would prohibit discrimination when selecting textbooks, library books, or other instructional materials for use in Oregon public schools. I first read Fahrenheit 451 as a teenager in the late 1950's, when its book burning seemed no more real than H.G. Wells or Jules Verne. Yet here we are, little more than fifty years later, and the dystopian works of Ray Bradbury, like George Orwell, have transitioned from fantasy to non-fiction. Our public schools and libraries, more than any other institutions, not only define us as Americans but enable us to be the independent thinkers we are. A friend of mine, a Latvian Jewish refugee from the days of Soviet occupation and rule, once told me about the book parties he and his friends would have. Someone would get hold of a banned book, tear out the pages one by one, and a group of friends would sit around a table reading each page and then passing it on to the next person. I don't think that's where we want to end up. Nor can we be complacent, thinking that those who would restrict our freedoms have miraculously stopped at Oregon's borders. They are here. It's very sad that a bill like SB 1583 is necessary, but it is, and I urge its passage. Thank you.