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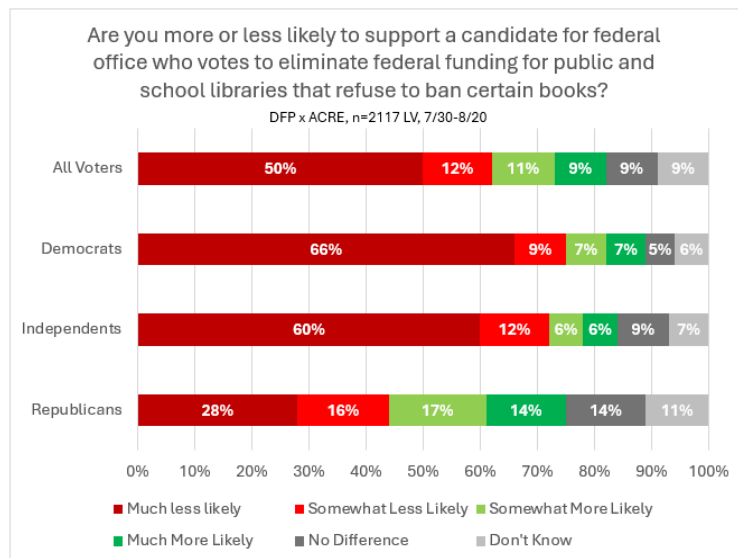
ACRE Launches to Defend the Freedom to Read and Support Literacy

As book bans reach record highs and reading scores hit historic lows, a new national organization will champion literacy and the right to read. And polling shows voters are poised to resoundingly reject book bans in the midterm elections.

On behalf of a united coalition of publishers, The American Center for Reading and Expression (ACRE) announces their organizational launch to champion literacy, expand access to books, and defend the right to speak, read, and think freely.

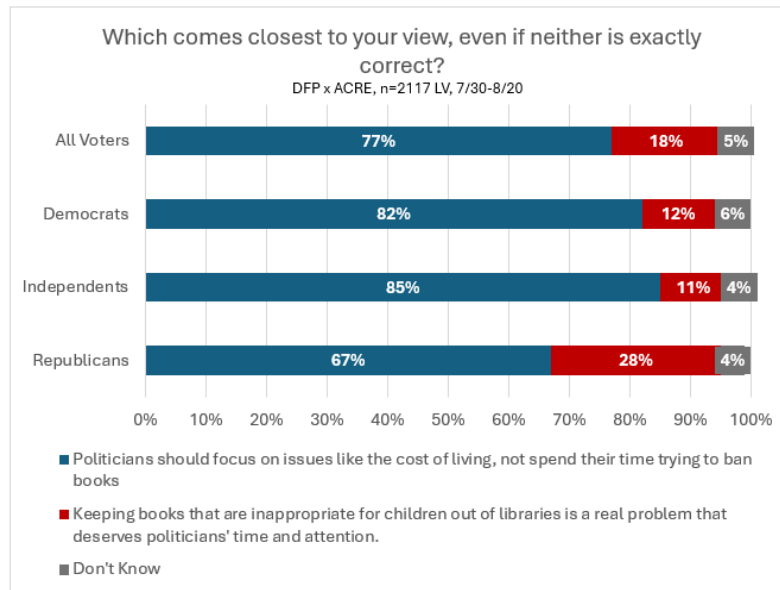
ACRE launches as school book bans continue to escalate, spurred on by politicians who would rather ban books on behalf of special interest groups than focus on our nation's crisis of literacy. PEN America, a nonprofit that champions literature and defends free expression, reports nearly 12,000 book-ban instances in public schools during the 2025–2026 school year—the most they've ever counted.

At the same time, politicians seek to defund our nation's public schools and libraries unless they ban books, a bill which has been introduced in the U.S. Senate and [passed committee](#) in the U.S. House. Recent polling by Data for Progress (DFP) shows that 62% of voters are less likely to support politicians who vote for such a measure - including **60% of independents** who are **much less likely** to vote for such a candidate, while only 20% are more likely. This poll was conducted by DFP on behalf of Penguin Random House in partnership with ACRE from 7/30-8/20, and had a sample size of 2,117 likely voters.



77% of voters - including $\frac{2}{3}$ of Republicans - said that politicians should focus on issues like cost of living, while **only 18% said that keeping inappropriate books out of libraries is a real problem** that deserves politicians' time and attention. But the same polling shows a **low level of awareness about the proposed bill**

in Congress to defund our nation's public schools that refuse to ban books with topics around race and gender - only 30% had heard "a lot" or "some" about this proposed bill.



Support for literacy and the freedom to read unites voters across the political spectrum, and in next month's midterm elections, voters will send a strong message: stop targeting our nation's schools and librarians and focus on the real issues.

"Literacy creates opportunities, and the joy of reading inspires us to keep learning," says Skip Dye, Chairman of the ACRE Board. "ACRE will bring readers and the entire literary community together to protect that possibility. We will stand up for the freedom to read and give the people who create, share, and love books a stronger voice in the decisions that shape their future."

ACRE will help policymakers navigate the changing world of reading and publishing—including creative economy issues like copyright and artificial intelligence—with a focus on expanding access for readers and supporting the authors, illustrators, and institutions that bring books to life.

About ACRE

The American Center for Reading and Expression brings readers, authors, illustrators, librarians, educators, publishers, and booksellers together to celebrate the joy of reading, champion literacy, and defend the freedom to speak, read, and think freely. Through public education, advocacy, research, and partnerships, ACRE will give this community a stronger voice in public policy and help more people discover books and the joy of reading. Learn more at www.theacre.org.

Source: PEN America, October 5, 2026: 2025–2026 school book-ban findings.

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