

Gov. Pritzker Highlights University of Chicago Banned Book Collection During Banned Books Week

October 7 2023 7:45 AM



CHICAGO — Today, Governor JB Pritzker visited the University of Chicago Library to announce the University's plan to build a collection of books that have been historically banned, creating an accessible library open to the public. The event takes place during National Banned Books Week, which runs from October 1-7. The governor was joined by Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton and University of Chicago leadership.

“When we can engage with ideas that are new to us, challenge and be challenged by different perspectives, learn new things, understand all the amazing miracles and darkest hours of the world around us — we are all better off,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.**

“Today’s announcement not only means that any member of the public can come access commonly banned books here in person at UChicago — it also means that residents throughout Illinois can access these texts digitally. Even in the face of rising censorship around the country, I have faith in the power of free speech and free thinking to overcome. Through programming and protests and advocacy like this, Illinoisans demonstrate to the nation and the world what it really looks like to stand up for liberty.”

“Illinois continues to stand on the right side of history, refusing to censor educational and social reading material that celebrates our diversity and the richness of the human experience,” **said Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton.** “As we celebrate Banned Books Week, our administration is committed to protecting the voices and stories of those who have historically gone unheard and unseen.”

The event was held at the University of Chicago’s Regenstein Library and highlighted the value of intellectual freedom in Illinois and nationwide. Governor Pritzker emphasized the importance of literary access and supporting library staff, who have been dealing with threats around the state.

With support from the American Library Association (ALA), the University of Chicago will be consolidating dozens of “banned books” for their new collection, which can be freely accessed by members of the public with a UChicago Library visitor pass.

The collection will be digitized and made available to those nationwide who lack local access to these titles, in partnership with the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA). The virtual “Banned Book Club” app uses geolocation services to determine book titles that have been banned in users’ areas. The UChicago Library and DPLA have already made over 900 titles accessible, and are consistently increasing the number of available titles on the app.

In June 2023, Governor Pritzker signed a bill making Illinois the first state to outlaw book bans, encouraging schools and libraries to embrace education, literary justice, and equity. HB2789, which takes effect January 1, 2024, protects libraries from external restrictions to book collections.

Governor Pritzker also included \$1.6 million in the FY24 state budget to launch Dolly Parton's Imagination Library statewide. This initiative includes a book gifting program that mails free, high-quality books to children from birth to age five, no matter a family's income.

The Banned Book Collection at the Regenstein Library is currently available for access. The digital collection can be found on DPLA's recently launched "Banned Books Club" on the Palace e-reader app.