

# AN OPEN LETTER TO TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

from

*Pat Schroeder, President and CEO, Association of American Publishers*

In his “Coda” to *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury remarked that “There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches.” In misguided efforts to “protect” young minds and to avoid offending anyone’s sensibilities, many of these “lit matches” are being tossed at books on recommended reading lists and on school library shelves.

To the courageous teachers and librarians on the front lines, fighting for the right of students to read a wide variety of books of their own choosing, we want to tell you that you are not alone. The Association of American Publishers (AAP) is proud to stand with you. Working closely with allies such as the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom, the National Coalition Against Censorship, and the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, AAP continues to make the publishing industry’s voice resonate in the fight against censorship.

Among incidents we have weighed in on in recent months:

AAP joined in sending a letter protesting the removal of Robert Cormier’s highly acclaimed novel *The Chocolate War* from a 9th grade social studies curriculum in Harford County, Maryland on the complaint of a few parents about language and references to homosexuality. The decision to remove the book was ultimately reversed and teachers given the option of using *The Chocolate War* as required reading in a unit on school bullying and harassment if permission is obtained from parents.

In the wake of a book banning controversy in West Virginia involving two of Pat Conroy’s most popular works, AAP joined in a letter to the local newspaper calling a proposed rating system for books used in an honors English class unwise and unworkable. The books are back in the classroom.

AAP was among those protesting the removal of Khaled Hosseini’s novel *The Kite Runner* from a 10th grade honors English class in Morganton, North Carolina, noting that while the novel is “indeed concerned with mature, complex themes and historical events that are playing out in the world today,” it is precisely these elements that “recommend the book, rather than disqualify it as a teaching tool.”

You can find out more about AAP and the work of our Freedom to Read Committee by visiting the AAP web site at: <http://www.publishers.org> and clicking on the “Freedom to Read” link on the left.

We applaud your efforts to open young minds, and hope that you will consider us a resource and an ally.

Sincerely,



Pat Schroeder  
President and CEO,  
Association of American Publishers



50 F Street, N.W., 4th Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
Telephone: (202) 347-3375  
Fax: (202) 347-9690