

Virginia Public School Books Contain Images Too Pornographic for TV

Former governor Terry McAuliffe vetoed a bill to block sexually explicit books from schools



A Stamford, Conn., elementary library / Getty Images

Virginia TV stations refused to air an ad that exposes pornographic books in public school libraries, even though the books may still be checked out by schoolchildren.

Independent Women's Voice, a Virginia conservative women's advocacy group, created [the ad](#) and bought airtime late at night to reveal the existence of the books. They were rebuffed, however, from airing the ad by ABC, CBS, and NBC. The networks said federal law prohibits them from showing pornographic images. But the books, which have pornographic images and descriptions of sex and pedophilia, are still available in school libraries.

The battle between parents and public schools over curricula has been a fraught issue in the nation, particularly so in Virginia during the gubernatorial election. Critics have attacked Democratic candidate and former governor Terry McAuliffe for permitting sexually explicit material in schools and calling parents' concerns over the teaching of critical race theory a "racist dog whistle."

Parents have expressed outrage at the permissive stance that the state, its school board, and localities have taken on pornographic reading material in schools. In September, a Virginia mom [confronted](#) the Fairfax County School Board for allowing pornographic books in school libraries. She read excerpts and showed pictures from the books, one of which showed a fourth-grade boy performing oral sex on a grown man.

The board later removed the books from the school system pending a thorough review. But the books, *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe and *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison, are still available in school catalogs in neighboring counties such as Loudoun County, Arlington County, Alexandria County, and Montgomery County, Md.

McAuliffe in 2016 vetoed a bill that would have prevented students from having to see such sexually explicit material in schools. The so-called *Beloved* bill, which was named after a parent objected to sexually explicit content in the eponymous novel by Toni Morrison, would have allowed parents to review and opt out of engaging with sexually explicit books that might be shown to their children.

McAuliffe at the time called the bill "unnecessary" and said the matter would be resolved by the Virginia Board of Education. In 2017, however, the state board rejected a similar proposal to allow students to opt out of engaging with sexually explicit reading material.

When asked during a recent gubernatorial debate about vetoing the bill, McAuliffe defended his decision and said parents shouldn't have the final say about what reading materials are allowed in schools.

"I'm not going to let parents come into schools and actually take books out and make their own decision," McAuliffe said. "So, yeah, I stopped the bill. I don't think parents should be telling schools what they should teach."

Victoria Coley, the vice president of communications at Independent Women's Voice, called the existence of federally prohibited pornography on school bookshelves "shocking."

"It's shocking that images, and even some words, that federal law prohibits TV stations to share with adults are the same images being shared with Virginia students with no accountability," Coley said.

Parents' frustration with the nation's schools has occasioned backlash, sometimes from high-ranking elected officials. The *Washington Free Beacon* [reported](#) last week that the largest school board association in the country collaborated with the White House before it sent a letter asking the FBI to investigate parents as "domestic terrorists."