



Intellectual  
Freedom  
Committee

Oregon Library Association

## MAY 2023 SPECIAL DISTRICTS ELECTION RESULTS

Tuesday Topics: May 2023

*Welcome to Tuesday Topics, a monthly series covering topics with intellectual freedom implications for libraries of all types. Each message is prepared by a member of OLA's Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) or a guest writer. Questions can be directed to the author of the topic or to the IFC.*

May 16th, 2023 was election day for Special Districts across the State of Oregon. On the ballot for many counties were board member seats for both public library districts and school boards. In the current environment of politically motivated challenges against books, displays, and programs, it is increasingly important to be aware of the philosophical and political beliefs of those holding roles of power within our library districts. As stated by the [Philomath News](#), "School board members govern the state's 197 public school districts. They are responsible for deciding each district's priorities and goals; setting educational policies; hiring, firing and reviewing the district's superintendent, and approving the district's annual budget."

Further, as explained by [OPB \[Oregon Public Broadcasting\]](#), "School board races are technically nonpartisan. We are seeing increasing instances of special library district board candidates also aligning with specific political parties. It is by no means the norm, though, nor is it as common as with school board elections. But in recent years, school board candidates have increasingly sided with one major political party or the other, with platforms going beyond typical school board issues like budgets and superintendent performance. Instead, often under the umbrella of 'parents rights,' conservative candidates have pushed national talking points like access to books related to the LGBTQ+ experience, parental input on public school curriculum, or other issues that parents deem unsuitable for public schools."

As stated by the [Associated Press](#): "The parents' rights movement demands transparency around teaching but also includes a wide range of cultural stances, calling for schools to remove certain books dealing with race or sexuality, for example, and an end to history lessons that aren't 'patriotic.'"

To offer more clarity on the outcomes of these board seats, the Intellectual Freedom Committee is sharing the following recap of the election results. More information on each of these can be found using the hyperlinks within this article and by going to the Oregon Secretary of State website results found here: <https://results.oregonvotes.gov/Default.aspx>.

**DISCLAIMER:** The Oregon Library Association (OLA) is a non-partisan non-profit organization committed to promoting the values of intellectual freedom and First Amendment rights that are core to our profession. This information about election results is focused on candidates' demonstrated commitment to upholding and protecting the principles of the First Amendment. OLA does not endorse nor oppose candidates for political office. The primary focus of OLA's advocacy is to ensure that the rights of free expression and access to information are safeguarded within the library community and beyond.

**Canby School District:** In Canby, three candidates ran on the platform of removing “sexually explicit and vulgar material” in libraries. All three lost their race including two incumbents, Stefani Carlson and Dawn Depner. Their replacements on the Board are Kelly Oliver and Mark Bigej, respectively.

Canby had [recently removed](#) controversial books from their school library. The books were removed from the shelves, pending review, rather than remaining until the reconsideration committee makes a decision.

**Chetco Community Public Library:** Two of Chetco’s incumbents won, which means that there is still a pro-intellectual freedom majority. Chetco Community Public Library has experienced intellectual freedom challenges in the past, and the board has supported intellectual freedom.

**[Crook County School District:](#)** Three new Board members were elected to the Crook County School District, calling themselves the “[Momma Bears](#)” running on a [controversial campaign](#) ad stating the “current board has ‘invited the sexualization of our kids into our schools.’” Cheyenne Edgerly, one of the “Momma Bears,” is also on the Crook County Library Board and has been a main voice in the request to [label LGBTQ materials](#) in the children’s section.

**Deschutes Public Library:** All incumbents retained seats, resulting in no change to board make-up.

**[Eugene area school boards:](#)** From [The Register Guard](#), Sunday, May 21, edition:

**[Eugene 4J:](#)** All four contested positions see a “significant” lead by candidates who have

expressed support for “high-risk students such as students of color, economically disadvantaged students, disabled students and LGBTQ students.”

**Bethel (Northwest Eugene):** All three contested positions see sizable leads for candidates supported by the Oregon Education Association. “[A]ll three mention boosting student belonging and inclusion...”

**Springfield:** Two contested positions. Leading candidate Ken Kohl is “supported by labor unions including the Oregon Education Association and the Springfield Education Association” as well as Stand for Children. Nicole De Graff “was endorsed by Intisar Strategies, LLC, a political consulting firm for center-right candidates in Oregon.”

**Hillsboro School District:** Also from [The Oregonian](#), “while in Hillsboro and North Clackamas, candidates who [...] called for more parental control over curriculum choices appeared to be losing their races, according to early returns.”

**Hood River County Library District:** The pro-intellectual freedom candidates were successful in the election.

**Josephine Community Library District:** The pro-intellectual freedom candidates were successful in election.

**Oregon City School Board:** Four Board positions resulted in a dramatic change in Board political leanings. All four replaced incumbents had held “parental rights” ideologies, while the four new Board Members lean “pro-intellectual freedom.”

**McMinville School Board:** The pro-intellectual freedom candidates were successful in the election.

**Newberg School District:** From [The Portland Tribune](#), the pro-intellectual freedom candidates were successful in the election, significantly altering the make-up of the board. The school has recently been in the regional and national news for attempting to ban political symbols such as rainbow flags and Black Lives Matter on campus, among other anti-intellectual freedom stances.

**North Clackamas School Board:** As stated by [The Clackamas Review](#), the pro-intellectual freedom candidates were successful in the election.

Also from [The Oregonian](#), “candidates who [...] called for more parental control over curriculum choices appeared to be losing their races, according to early returns.”

**Redmond School District:** Successfully retained two pro-Intellectual Freedom Board Members, though the overall make-up of the Board leans more towards “parental control” ideologies.

**Roseburg School District:** Four “parental rights” candidates leading in election results, resulting in a majority on that board.

**South Wason County School District:** Two “parental rights” candidates leading in election results, resulting in a majority on that board.

**Salem-Keizer Public Schools:** Election results unknown at this time.