



**ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**

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**Lia Neveu Selected as 2024 Illinois Library Association  
Intellectual Freedom Award Recipient**

The 2024 Illinois Library Association (ILA) Intellectual Freedom Award is awarded to Lia Neveu, a current student of Lakes Community High School and alumni of Millburn School District 24. This award, presented by the ILA Intellectual Freedom Committee, recognizes Neveu for their outstanding contributions in defending intellectual freedom. The award was established in 2007 in honor of former ILA Director Robert P. Doyle.

On March 18, 2024, the Millburn School Board for Millburn K-8 School District 24 voted 4-3 to cancel the Illinois Young Readers' Choice Award Program. This program includes three book lists that students across the state vote on according to their respective grade levels: the Monarch Program (gr. K-2), the Bluestem Program (gr. 3-5), and the Caudill Program (gr 4-8). The School Board alleged that the Caudill booklist in particular was "left-leaning," and promoted "racial essentialism." This was based entirely on one board member's experience with his child. High school junior Lia Neveu started a Change.org petition called "*Bring Back the Caudill Program in District 24!*" which was pivotal in The Board's decision to reinstate the Illinois Young Readers' Choice Award Programs on April 22, 2024.

Neveu addressed the school board during public comment at all three meetings that they attended. Neveu empowered the entire community to also speak during public comment, including many current and former students of Millburn District 24, ranging from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Parents, teachers, librarians, and concerned citizens stood strong behind the students at these meetings. During this time, Neveu met with State Senator Mary-Edly Allen for Lake County District 31 to discuss book censorship in Illinois. Neveu's Change.org petition garnered 1743 signatures and the attention of the media, which allowed over a thousand Illinois students the ability to read and vote freely.

This was not Neveu's first time using a Change.org petition to bring awareness to an intellectual freedom issue. During their freshman year of high school, their first Change.org petition helped return the book *Genderqueer* to the shelves at School District 117 in Lake County and had 559 signatures. This experience taught Neveu some best practices for grassroots organizing, which was put into practice successfully this year in Millburn.

The ILA's Intellectual Freedom Committee is honored to present this award to Lia Neveu as a leader who has championed students' right to read.

The Illinois Library Association Intellectual Freedom Award will be presented at an awards ceremony during the 2024 Illinois Library Association Annual Conference. The conference will take place October 8-10, 2024, in Peoria, Illinois.

For more information, contact the Illinois Library Association.

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### **About the Illinois Library Association**

The Illinois Library Association (ILA) is a professional membership organization that represents Illinois libraries and the millions who depend on them. Founded in 1896, it is the third-largest state library association and serves as a chapter within the American Library Association. ILA is comprised of 2,000 personal and more than 500 institutional members, made up of public, academic, school, and special libraries, as well as librarians, library staff, trustees, students, and library vendors.