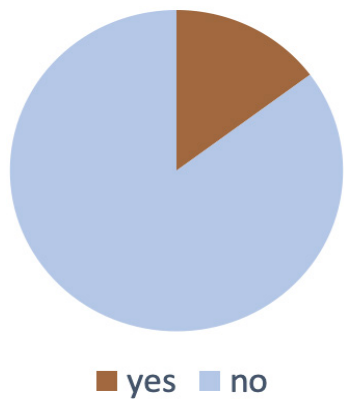


## What's Your Opinion?

We asked students if books deemed "sexually explicit" should be banned in schools.

Out of 81 responses:  
 Yes, they should be banned -- 12  
 No, they should be allowed -- 69



## Next Poll:

**Language majors**  
 Should A-State offer more language degrees?

Students can answer the poll on The Herald's Instagram page, [@astateherald](https://www.instagram.com/astateherald). Instagram polls are posted on Mondays. Previous poll results can be found on [astatetheherald.com](https://www.astatetheherald.com). Have an idea for a poll? Send your ideas to [heraldopinion1921@gmail.com](mailto:heraldopinion1921@gmail.com).

These and future articles can be found on the Opinion section of The Herald's website.

## Don't drag us down with Tennessee's "drag bill"

**KAYLA LINDSEY**  
 SPECIAL TO THE HERALD



Kayla Lindsey is a junior creative media productions major from Springfield, Missouri.

The first time I had ever heard the term "drag queen," I was 8 years old. I was browsing some entertainment magazines and they had done a story on the drag queen Marsha P. Johnson. I remember not understanding the content and asking my father what the story was about.

My question was met with some kind of answer along the lines of "that stuff isn't appropriate," and proceeded to put the magazine in the trash. I never thought too much about that moment until a few years later, when "RuPaul's Drag Race" became more prevalent on television.

As I started to dissect the show, I remembered the conversation I had with my father. My mind circled back to the statement he made. I couldn't comprehend why this was considered "inappropriate." Flash forward to today, and the topic of drag queens being

inappropriate is still being discussed by families all over the United States.

Last Thursday, the Tennessee Senate approved a bill that prohibits "adult cabaret acts," also known as drag performances, on public property in order to keep children away from them. Violators can face a misdemeanor, while

from Tennessee who sponsored the bill, informed CNN that the legislation "is not anti-drag. It's pro-child. I am carrying the legislation to protect children from being exposed to sexually explicit drag shows that are inappropriate for minor audiences. It is similar to laws that prohibit children from going to a 'strip club'."

repeat offenders will face a felony.

Governor Bill Lee has declared he will sign it after the Tennessee House passed it last week. The law's effective date is July 1, 2023.

The bill in Tennessee is the first of almost a dozen similar bills that are currently being debated in state legislatures controlled by the GOP.

Republicans argue that the shows encourage kids to engage in inappropriate sexual ideas and imagery; however, Democrats dispute this claim and argue that the new legislation is discriminatory against the LGBTQ+ population and may infringe on the First Amendment rights.

LGBTQ+ groups believe the legislation under discussion contributes to a heightened state of worry for the community, with transgender issues and drag culture becoming increasingly prevalent. These shows have occasionally been the subject of attacks.

Senator Jack Johnson, a Republican

inappropriate is still being discussed by families all over the United States.

from Tennessee who sponsored the bill, informed CNN that the legislation "is not anti-drag. It's pro-child. I am carrying the legislation to protect children from being exposed to sexually explicit drag shows that are inappropriate for minor audiences. It is similar to laws that prohibit children from going to a 'strip club'."

In the CBS article, "The History of Drag and How Drag Queens Got Pulled Into Politics," when answering the question, "Is Drag Sexual?" they state, "Many drag opponents cite nudity in their objections. Every performer makes different choices, but drag queens often wear more, not less, clothing than you'd see on a typical American woman of the 21st century, at a public beach or on network TV." The article further explains that the performers point out that the opposition to drag sees the cross-dressing part as sexual deviancy.

Drag performer Bella DuBalle, who resides in Memphis, is fighting against the bill, expressing that if it becomes law, it would criminalize drag. DuBalle stated that she fears for her life in an interview with Insider<sup>3</sup>. A second offense, according to the proposed law, would be a Class E felony, which is punishable by up to six years in prison. DuBalle, who identifies as nonbinary outside of drag, expressed concern that the way she dresses in her everyday life would get her in trouble with the law if it is passed. They vocalized this fear, saying, "I'm scared if I'm wearing gender-nonconforming clothing in

Kroger and somebody has their kids and they clutch 'em tight and call the cops, I could get arrested just for presenting the way I present in my daily life."

As someone who has multiple friends in the drag community and has attended more drag shows than I can count, I truly fear for these performers. The drag community uses drag as a form of art to express themselves. Why is banning them from public spaces "saving the children?" It truly baffles me that all of the significant strides we have made for the LGBTQ+ community over the last decade are backtracking. These laws can truly affect the future of my generation as well as the generations after us. One can only hope that society will see these laws' shortcomings and fight to have them changed.

To see the full article go to [astatetheherald.com](https://www.astatetheherald.com)



PHOTO COURTESY OF BELLA DUBALLE ON FACEBOOK  
 Bella DuBalle is a drag performer from Memphis, Tennessee.

## Bill 81: useless at best, homophobic at worst

**JACK BOND**  
 OPINION EDITOR



Jack Bond is a senior English major from Marion.

Senate Bill 81 is a recent bill proposed by the senate that would ban library books deemed "obscene." This applies to both school and public libraries.

The bill defines obscenity as "means that to the average person, applying contemporary community standards, the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole applies to prurient

interest."

Any librarians caught distributing "obscene" materials to a minor would be charged with a criminal offense. The bill would also require libraries to have written policies for selecting and removing materials in their collection.

The bill has already garnered backlash from librarians, with many saying the bill is not necessary and/or blatant LGBTQ+ censorship.

It may not seem like an anti-LGBTQ+ law at first, but when you take into consideration that republican senator Dan Sullivan sponsors the bill, the homophobia becomes more clear.

Let's not forget 2021's Jonesboro Public Library pride fiasco, in which the library was forced to move LGBTQ+ books out of the children's section. Sullivan himself supported this move, stating that the books were not appropriate for children.

In other words, Sullivan's definition of "obscene" or "sexually explicit" material essentially encompasses

anything that isn't heteronormative. What's stopping him and the rest of the GOP from using this law to censor books that children might need to better understand themselves?

Even putting the homophobia aside, the definition of "obscene" materials may end up censoring a lot of material whose purpose is much broader than sex ed.

Take classical art for example. Many artists throughout history, namely the ancient Greeks, tended to depict a lot of nudity. What's stopping the bill from removing books about classical art from libraries?

Though some of the art was not intended to be erotic, they can certainly be argued to be so simply because of the depiction of "obscenity." Certainly lawmakers won't want to ban an important part of history, but then the bill becomes inconsistent. Why are some obscene materials banned, but others aren't?

One could argue that the bill is



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARKANSAS ADVOCATE  
 Stephanie Sweeney, librarian at Craighead Jonesboro Public Library, speaks against Bill 81.

aimed at pornography and other similar materials, but if that is the case, then the bill is practically useless. Ask any librarian and they will tell you that they don't allow porn in their collection. If somebody's worried about their kid accessing such content, they need to be policing the internet instead of baselessly attacking libraries.

But, as previously mentioned, the bill is not really aimed at porn. It pretends to be aimed at it so that it can attack the LGBTQ+ community. Bill 81 is useless at best, homophobic at worst.

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