



Book

Challenges

Policies, Guidelines, and Mental Health Tips

Table of contents

01	The Team	06	NYS Policy
02	Book Challenge	07	
03	When a Book Challenge Happens	08	
04	Library Trauma Cycle		
05	Selfcare Tips		



The Team



Katherine Pizzuto
Amherst Public Libraries
Buffalo & Erie County Public
Libraries



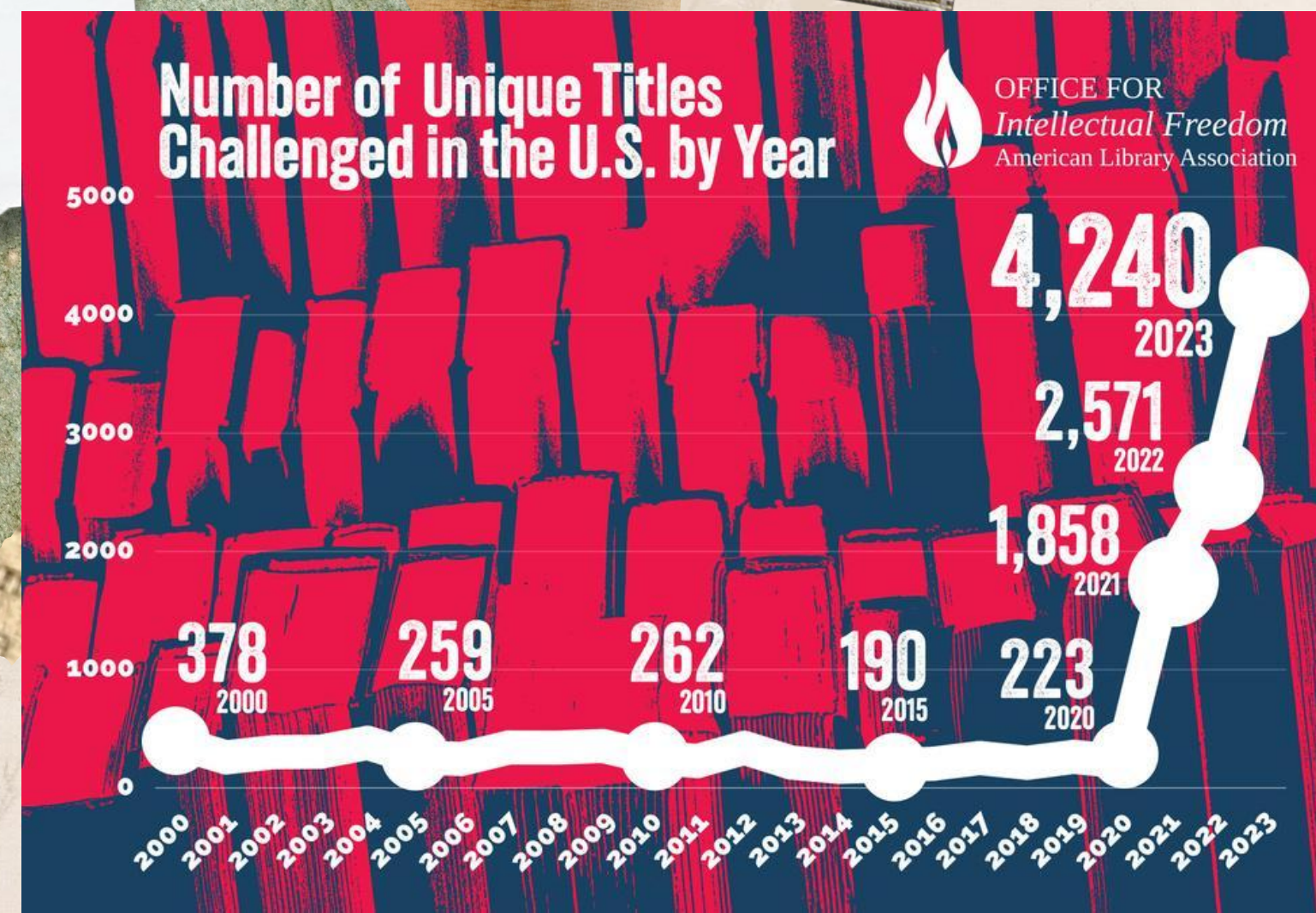
Kim Naples
Briarcliff Manor Public
Library

Tamkya Miles
Advisor

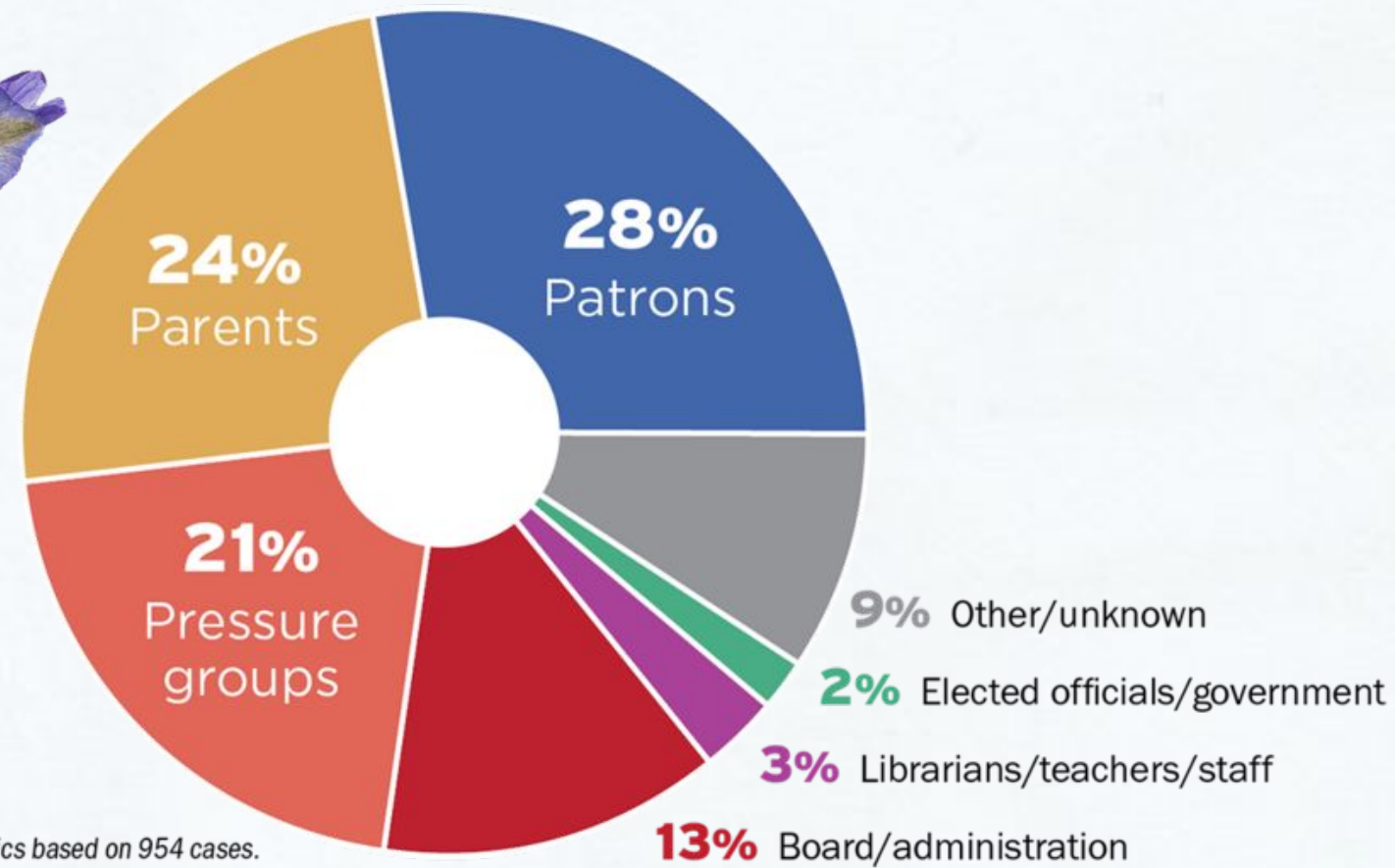
New Orleans Public Library

What is a Book Challenge?

“A challenge is an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group. A banning is the removal of those materials. Challenges do not simply involve a person expressing a point of view; rather, they are an attempt to remove material from the curriculum or library, thereby restricting the access of others. Due to the commitment of librarians, teachers, parents, students and other concerned citizens, most challenges are unsuccessful and most materials are retained in the school curriculum or library collection. (ALA)”



Who Makes Book Challenges?



54%
Public libraries



39%
School libraries



5%
Schools



2%
Higher education/other

Statistics based on 1,247 cases with known locations.

American Library Association. (2021).

WHO DEMANDS BOOK BANS IN SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES?

72%

Pressure Groups and Government Entities
(including elected officials, board members, and administrators)

16%
Parents

12%
Other
(individual library users,
teachers, librarians, staff)



ALA American Library Association

American Library Association. (2024).

When a Challenge Happens

A person comes up to the reference desk and demands a book be taken off the shelves. What do you do? Here are some tips on how to deal with this scenario....

STEP 1

- **Stay Calm**
 - Own the Room
 - Take a Deep Breath
 - Give yourself time to respond and reflect.
- **Calm Body Language/ Strong Pose.**
 - Whatever gives you confidence.
- **Listen**
 - Try to hear what they have to say. It will help with the next step. People just want to heard!
- **Empathize**
 - This can be difficult, if you cannot, just listen!

STEP 2

- **Attempt to Resolve the Conflict**
 - Educate
 - Use those Librarian Skills!
- **Try Again!**
 - Be Creative, Use what they told
 - Repeat yourself

STEP 3

- **If the Challenge is not Resolved**
 - Send in help! You are not alone.
 - Ask for the Managers Help
 - If unresolved ask if they would like to speak with the Director at a later date.
- If your Library has a complaint form, ask them to fill out a form.

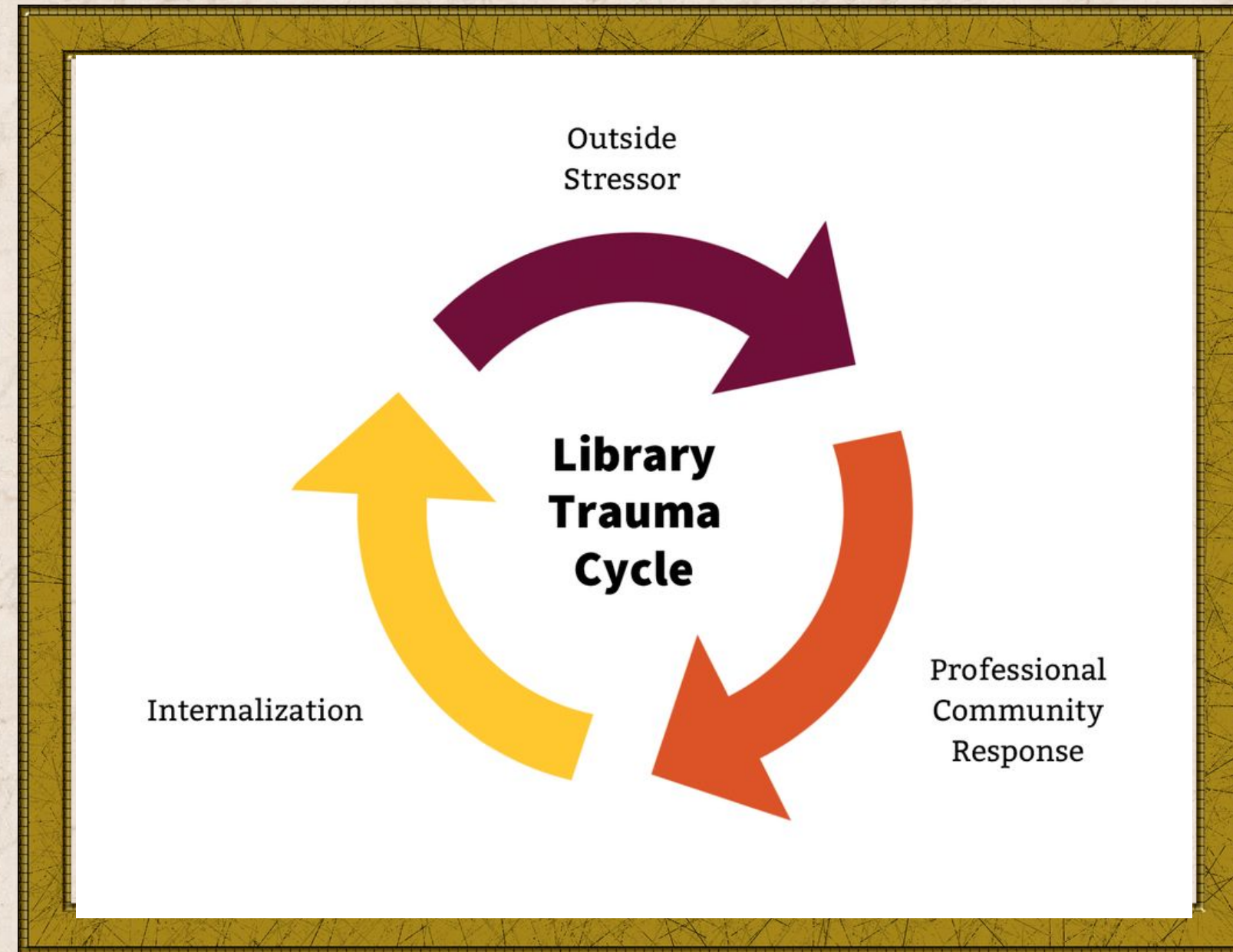
STEP 4/5

- **When it over**
 - Give yourself time/ or your staff time to reflect
 - Think about what happened.
 - Talk it over with your peers.

STEP 4/5

- **TAKE A BREAK**
 - Do not talk about it, clear your head, relax, do something fun!

Library Trauma Cycle



Outside Stressor - An adverse event external to the staff member. An example is dealing with workplace violence, sexual harassment, bullying among others.

Professional Community Response - The response, or lack of response from coworkers, supervisors, and professional community.

Internalization - without support, library workers feel alone or it is their fault. They hold on to this stress.

Self Care Tips

- GET ENOUGH SLEEP
- CREATE BOUNDARIES
- MAINTAIN
CONNECTIONS
- BE PATIENT
- STAY ACTIVE
- AVOID DOOM
SCROLLING
- REACH OUT

Library Journal



New York State Policy Initiatives

I ♥ NY

New York State Capitol

Aimed at School
Libraries

Freedom to Read

Act

S.1100 (May)

/A.3119(Kelles)

Open Shelves

Act

S.1099(May)

/A.777(Simone)

Aimed at Public
Libraries



Freedom to Read Act

From NYLA's Memo of Support

“If enacted, this bill would require the Commissioner of Education to develop laws and rules that ensure school libraries and library staff are empowered to curate and develop collections that provide students with access to the widest array of developmentally appropriate materials available to their district.”

<https://www.nyla.org/2025-legislative-initiatives#FRA>





Freedom to Read Act

More from NYLA's Memo of Support

“The requirement outlined in this legislation would extend the protection offered by these policies statewide, as well as establish a baseline principle of intellectual and perspectival inclusivity to which all districts must adhere.”

<https://www.nyla.org/2025-legislative-initiatives#FRA>





Open Shelves Act

From NYLA's Memo of Support

“If enacted, this bill would require every free association, public, and hospital library or, with the advice of the appropriate tribal government and library board of trustees, Indian Library, which receives any portion of the moneys appropriated by the state to aid such libraries, to adopt policies and procedures that ensure library staff are able to curate and develop collections, services, and programming that reflect the interests of all people of the community that the library serves. <https://www.nyla.org/2025-legislative-initiatives#FRA>

The background features a collage of elements: a piece of torn, aged paper with faint, illegible text; a sprig of blue delphinium flowers on the left; and a single pink rose on the right. The central text is overlaid on a white rectangular area.

Open Shelves Act

More from NYLA's Memo of Support

“...these policies ensure that contested materials and programs are evaluated as whole works according to their merits rather than as decontextualized excerpts that might offend the personal sensibilities of some, but not all, library patrons.”

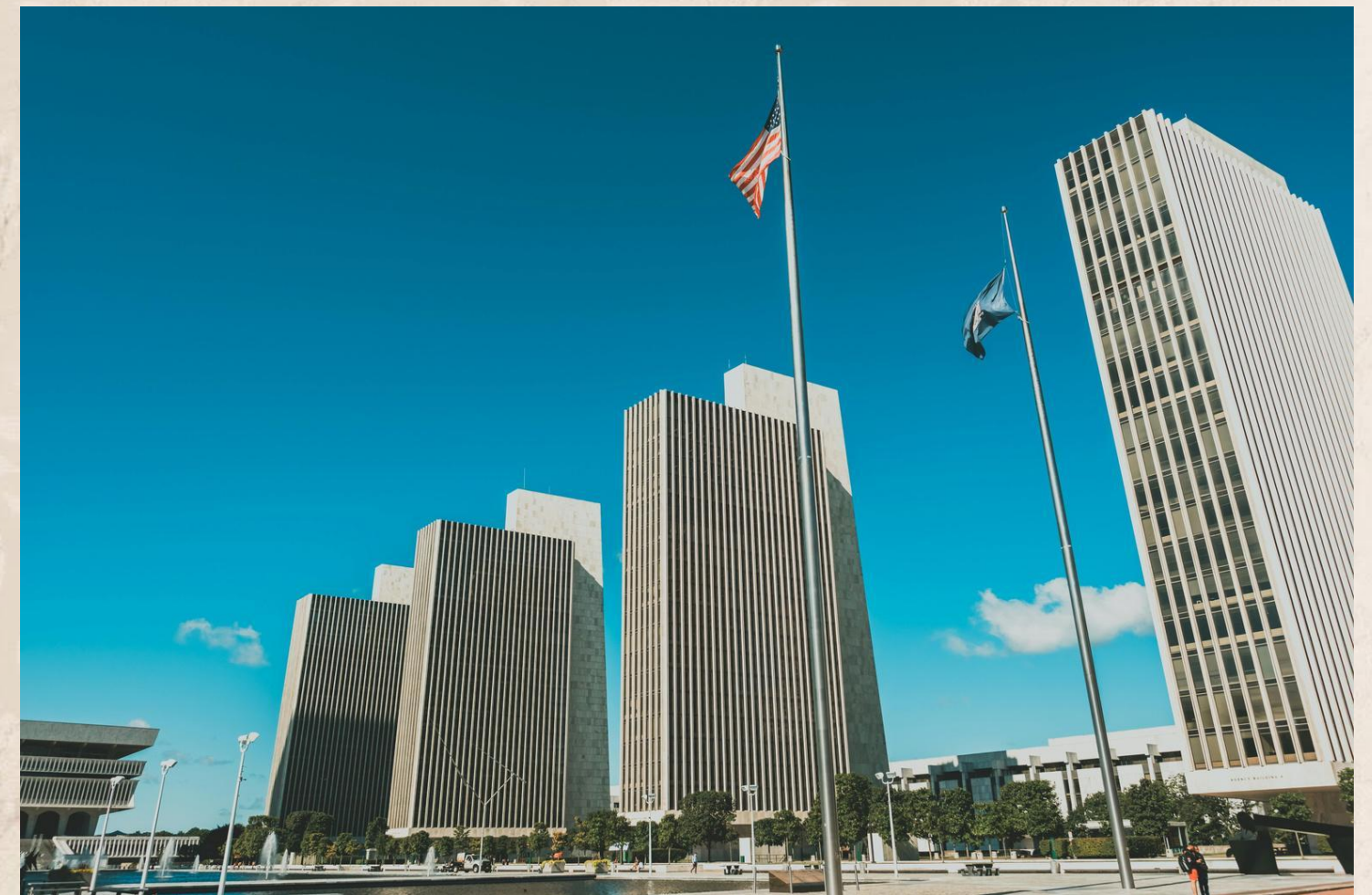
<https://www.nyla.org/2025-legislative-initiatives#FRA>

Where are they now?

Both passed the Senate on 5/20!

Both have moved on to the Assembly.

The legislature has until June 12th to take in any comments from constituents.



Empire State Plaza



Thank
you

References

American Library Association. (2012). About Banned & Challenged Books.

<https://www.ala.org/bbooks/aboutbannedbooks>

American Library Association. (2024). Book Ban Data. American Library Association. <https://www.ala.org/bbooks/book-ban-data>

Comito , L., & Zabriskie, C. (2022). Institute of Museum and Library Services

(IMLS). Urban Library Trauma Study.

Kletter, M. (2021). Self-Care for Stressful Times. Library Journal.

<https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/self-care-for-stressful-times-your-home-librarian>

Palmer, S., Peoples, L., & Evans , T. (2024, November 6). Leading with Empathy, Compassion and Intuition [Conference Presentation].

Yeon , J., & Dudak , L. T. (2024). Potential for Trauma in Public Libraries Experiencing Book Banning and Material Challenges. Taylor &

