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CONTACT: Jas Chana, NCAC Communications Director
jas@ncac.org, 212-807-6222 ext.107

Free Speech Groups Defend Literary Classics After Censorship in Virginia Schools

Accomack, VA, Dec 7 2016- The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) is defending the place of two masterpieces of American literature-- *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*-- in Virginia schools after the books were removed from classrooms because they contain racial slurs.

The school district in question, Accomack County Public Schools, decided to suspend, with immediate effect, the use of the two literary classics in school libraries and classrooms after a local parent issued a formal complaint about the presence of racial slurs in the books. A committee, consisting of schools officials and library specialists, has been convened to decide their fate in the school district.

NCAC's letter to the school district underlines the foundational place of the two works in the American literary canon as well as the First Amendment concerns that removing them would raise. It also criticizes the district policy that calls for the suspension of challenged books, prior to any review. Such a policy, the letter argues, runs the risk of wreaking havoc on reading lists and curricula, as the school allows the opinion of a single parent to disrupt the education of every student.

The letter is co-signed by the National Council of Teachers of English, the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia, Authors Guild, American Booksellers for Free Expression, Association of American Publishers, Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, PEN America and the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators.

"The decision to suspend two American literary giants because of historically accurate language does a great disservice to the education of Accomack students," said NCAC's Youth Free Expression Program Associate Josh Zuckerman, "racist language, while understandably discomforting to some modern readers, is necessary in conveying the reality of the history that the books depict."

[READ THE LETTER](#)

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The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) is an alliance of 50 national non-profit organizations dedicated to defending freedom of thought, inquiry and expression.

