



Virginia Governor's Race Turns to 'Beloved' a Week Before Election

"Glenn Youngkin is promoting banning books by one of America's most prominent Black authors"

Drew Wilder

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Parent involvement in schools has been a major issue in the Virginia governor's race. In the final days of the campaigns, the debate turned to which books belong in schools.

Ads on books are all over the airwaves.

"Virginia parents have a right to make decisions on their children's education," an ad for Glenn Youngkin, the Republican candidate, says.

"Glenn Youngkin's main focus in the final days of this election? He's trying to ban books," an ad for Terry McAuliffe, the Democratic candidate, counters.

One of the newest ads features Fairfax County mother Laura Murphy talking about "Beloved," the Pulitzer Prize-winning book by Toni Morrison.

"It was some of the most explicit material you can imagine," Murphy says.

Murphy tried, unsuccessfully, to get Fairfax County Public Schools to remove "Beloved" from her son's required reading in senior-year Advanced Placement English. She said it gave him nightmares.

At a rally Tuesday, McAuliffe attacked Youngkin for the ad and his campaign passed out copies of the book.

“Glenn Youngkin is promoting banning books by one of America's most prominent Black authors,” he said.

Youngkin said parents should be allowed to reject certain books from school curriculums.

“There's a fundamental right in Virginia to be engaged in your child's education,” he said.

In March, Youngkin called out Loudoun County schools when the district again stated that Dr. Seuss books would not be the focal point of Read Across America Day.

"Are we surprised that Dr. Seuss is being pushed out of Loudoun County schools today?" he said.

Youngkin's team would not offer a comment on the difference between removing Dr. Seuss books versus removing "Beloved."

McAuliffe's team said it's part of stoking a culture war.

It's no surprise that books and what's taught in schools are flashpoints, Neal McCluskey of the Cato Institute said.

“We need to remember that public schools are government-run institutions,” he said. “That means they are going to be controlled by politics. They have to be controlled by politics if they're controlled by government. So we shouldn't be surprised when they become political issues.”