

PRESS RELEASE

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Rally For the Jeopardized Niles-Maine District Library

Community rallies once again in support of their treasured library under threat of three hostile anti-library trustees.

Community will rally to defend their Niles-Maine District Library on Monday, September 26th, at 5:45 PM at 6960 W. Oakton St, Niles, IL. Library supporters will gather on the lawn of the Niles-Maine District Library for a half-hour rally before they march in to make public comments at the budget hearing. Last year, faced with a hostile majority on the board of trustees, one of the largest rallies in Niles history gathered at nearby NICO park before flooding the board room with hours of impassioned comments. After last year's rally, one anti-library trustee resigned, leaving the board split 3-3 and a vacancy that is still unfilled.

This year the IL legislature unanimously passed legislation addressing situations like the one at NMDL, when a board refuses to fill a vacant seat. Following the law, the Illinois State Library accepted applications, interviewed candidates, and State Librarian Jesse White appointed Umair Qadeer to fill the vacancy on the board. But one trustee, in his third suit against the library, filed for a temporary restraining order barring the swearing-in this week. Timing is crucial as the 9/26 budget hearing can decide the future of the Niles-Maine District Library.

The Niles-Maine District Library was an award-winning Star Library that attracted and retained talented staff. But as the anti-library trustees' "temporary hiring freeze" enters its 18th month, 30% of staff have resigned or retired and none of them have been replaced, resulting in cuts to programming and services. The remaining staff's union bargaining team continues to work toward their first contract.

Many communities across the US invest in their public libraries, and the people benefit from access to books and other materials, technology, professional staff, programs, and a public space where anyone of any age can feel safe and welcome. At the same time, in other communities right-wing attacks threaten even the ongoing existence of a public library.

In this suburban Chicago area, community members have come together with Niles Coalition to organize a #SaveNilesLibrary campaign so that this library and other local public institutions will not be left vulnerable to similar attacks.

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