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Moms For Liberty's School Board Takeover Attempts Fizzled Out On Election Day

The results from an election cycle widely viewed as a preview for 2024 are bad news for the group's ultra-conservative agenda.

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Moms for Liberty, the right-wing [extremist](#) group that aims to bring a conservative agenda to public education, set out to take over school boards across the country in Tuesday's elections. But instead of installing like-minded candidates in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Iowa school districts, its attempt fell flat.

The group burst onto the national scene in 2020, early in the coronavirus pandemic, when conservative parents were railing against masking in schools. Less concerned with traditional public school issues like teacher retention and funding, Moms for Liberty champions anti-LGBTQ policies like banning transgender students from using bathrooms aligned with their gender identities and removing books with racial justice or LGBTQ themes from school libraries. Over the past few years, group members have sought to gain influence in school board races across the country in an effort to transform U.S. public schools into right-wing evangelical utopias.

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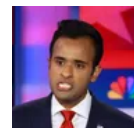
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But while Moms for Liberty candidates in smaller and more rural districts were able to notch victories on Tuesday, they floundered in the suburbs.

The group's results in Ohio were dismal. In Hamilton County, home to Cincinnati and more than 800,000 people, only two of eight Moms for Liberty candidates [succeeded](#). Likewise, in Franklin County, where Columbus is located, only two of the group's eight endorsed candidates won.

And in Stark County, which voted for Donald Trump in 2016 and 2020, the group fared even worse. Only one of its nine endorsed candidates won.

Next door in the swing state of Pennsylvania, Moms for Liberty [endorsed dozens of candidates](#) in school board races. Some candidates in smaller and more rural districts were able to succeed. But the bigger picture showed more liberal or Democrat-backed candidates sweeping their races. In Bucks County, outside of Philadelphia, MFL and other right-wing groups had been seeking to get conservative candidates on the board in the Central Bucks and Penridge school districts. Instead, Democratic candidates [swept](#) both races.

Even in the traditionally red Iowa, MFL had a poor showing. The group endorsed 13 candidates across four counties, but only one candidate won in a very small, rural district.

It's a bad sign for Moms for Liberty's hopes of taking its message nationwide in 2024. This year's elections were widely viewed as a [harbinger of what the nation can expect in 2024](#), which will almost certainly include a Donald Trump-versus-Joe Biden rematch for the presidency. And things have changed dramatically since the last time the once-and-maybe-future presidents went head to head in 2020: The Supreme Court has revoked federal abortion protections, a right-wing anti-LGBTQ+ agenda is on the rise, and teaching anything about race and racism in school has become a political issue.

But Moms for Liberty's poor performance in the polls may be a sign that the so-called conservative "[war on woke](#)" just isn't a battle voters are interested in.

Just look at how the group fared in Loudoun County, Virginia, where MFL focused on a purple county that has become a national symbol of how the culture wars are infecting public education. The county's schools have been [mired in controversy](#) since 2021 when a student allegedly committed sexual assault at two different high schools.

After conservatives falsely claimed that the alleged perpetrator was transgender, right-wing rhetoric began permeating the school district, leading to contentious school board meetings that were covered by right-wing news outlets — and giving the Virginia county national exposure.

In Tuesday's school board election, all nine seats were up for grabs, and Moms for Liberty endorsed four candidates — but only one prevailed. Ultimately, liberals [won a 6-3 majority](#)

on the county school board.

Moms for Liberty has gotten support from top Republicans like Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, who ran on a successful campaign on “parental rights” in 2021, and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has been echoing right-wing culture war rhetoric in his ongoing bid for the White House.

Parental rights — which have generally manifested as the right to prevent children from learning or reading about sexuality or race in any capacity, at any age — seem to be the issue MFL believes will lead its candidates to success.

And while Youngkin and DeSantis have used this definition of parental rights to their political advantage, the actual policies groups like Moms for Liberty champion appear to be politically unpopular. While MFL targets teachers for being “woke” or smears them as “groomers,” polling shows that [parents are satisfied with their children’s schools](#). And while MFL has championed book bans and increasing restrictions on what teachers can say in the classroom, [most parents oppose such policies](#).

Attacking transgender students has been the core fixation of many MFL-backed candidates. Yet while Americans may be divided on gender-affirming care for trans youth and transgender athletes participating on sports teams that reflect their gender identities, most voters oppose [political attacks on transgender people](#), according to polls.

After a lackluster showing from [culture war candidates in 2022](#) and again last night, it’s becoming clear that casting public school teachers as the bad guys and Moms for Liberty as students’ only hope just isn’t the winning strategy that MFL and other conservatives want it to be.

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