

Book Challenge Fails in Split BOE Vote of

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“I am thrilled for my students, I am thrilled for our teachers, I’m glad that we’ve got the freedom to read, the freedom to think,” That from Watauga High School English teacher Mary Kent Whitaker reacting to the a split vote as the Watauga Board of Education voted to uphold earlier decisions in the book challenge in the use of *The House of the Spirits* in the sophomore honors English class at Watauga High. The 3 to 2 vote upholding use of the book came after an earlier motion to only have the book available at the school library failed 2 to 3. Board members Ron Henries, Barbara Kinsey and Brenda Reese voted to uphold the second appeal committee's decision with Chairman Dr. Lee Warren and Vice Chairwoman Delora Hodges voted against the motion. A packed house heard two 30-minute talks by the primary parties, then an opinion of law before taking the two votes. Chastity Lesesne, mother of the 10th grader, and the challenger to the book, made an impassioned argument before the board and took the vote, still wanting to be a part of the process, “I really do hope that we can sit down together. I would love to be a part of the process, and love to give my encouragement of ideas to encourage our teachers because we do have the common goal—at least I hope we do— and that’s for the students.” Mary Kent Whitaker said that she will go forward with the teaching of *The House of the Spirits* almost immediately.