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Oklahoma libraries brace for funding delays as lawsuit over gutting federal agency filed



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Key Points AI-assisted summary

- The ALA and AFSCME are suing the Trump administration over cuts to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).
- The lawsuit challenges a Trump executive order mandating the IMLS cut non-statutorily required funding.
- Oklahoma's library agency anticipates delays and complications due to the funding cuts, while other states have already seen grant terminations.

Oklahoma state library officials are preparing for funding delays and complications as the Trump Administration [guts the country's library and museum agency's staff](#) and directs it to eliminate funding to states.

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries, along with similar agencies in other states across the country, was informed this week that all staff for the federal Institute of Library and Museum Services, commonly known as IMLS, were being placed on administrative leave. Some state libraries across the country were informed that federal grants approved last year are being terminated.

The moves in Washington, D.C., mean library systems in Oklahoma and other states could be left scrambling to make up funding gaps to continue to reach the tens of millions of Americans they collectively serve every year.

According to a grant termination letter received by some states, the grants violate an executive order President Donald Trump signed in March and are inconsistent with the administration's priorities for the IMLS. So far, Oklahoma's library agency has not received a termination letter for its Grants to States awards, though California's, Connecticut's and Washington's state librarians offices confirmed to USA TODAY that their grants had been ended six months early.

Trump's executive order states that IMLS must be reduced to its statutory functions and eliminate nonstatutory components and functions to the maximum extent.

More: [Trump funding cuts could threaten public libraries, Native American cultural institutions](#)

In response to the cuts, the American Library Association is joining the largest museum and library workers union to [challenge the Trump Administration's gutting](#) of the IMLS in court. The world's biggest library association announced the lawsuit on Tuesday alongside the union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

The IMLS works to improve libraries and offer access to national collection resources. Oklahoma agencies, including the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, received \$4.4 million in federal funds through the IMLS during fiscal year 2024.

Oklahoma may feel impacts even if it keeps its federal funding

Even if Oklahoma's IMLS grant funding is not terminated like other states, the state could face challenges to accessing the funds and reporting how they're spent if the federal library agency has no employees, according to Kaylee Reed, the public information officer for the Oklahoma Department of Libraries

"We are working to remain informed, flexible, and collaborative with the administration to advocate for the continuation of this vital program and communicate the positive return on investment it brings to Oklahoma communities," Reed said. "We're also keeping our state legislative and executive branch leaders informed of the situation while communicating potential direct

impacts that will be felt by Oklahomans if the Grants to States program were to end."

Under the 2018 Museum and Library Services Act, IMLS is statutorily required to send funding to state libraries under the Grants to States Program.

However, the act could expire in September if Congress doesn't take action. When Trump signed the executive order targeting IMLS on March 14, the [U.S. Senate passed and the president signed](#) a continuing resolution for fiscal year 2025, which provides funding for IMLS through September 2025.

The new legal complaint argues that cutting programs at IMLS will violate federal law by eliminating programs Congress has provided funding for and directed IMLS to undertake.

In a statement, American Library Association President Cindy Hohl said libraries play an important role in democracy, from preserving history to providing access to government information, advancing literacy and civic engagement and offering diverse perspectives.

"These values are worth defending," she said. "We will not allow extremists to threaten our democracy by eliminating programs at IMLS and harming the children and communities who rely on libraries and the services and opportunities they provide."