

FEDERAL FALLOUT

# American Library Association sues Trump, DOGE to stop dismantling Institute of Museums and Library Services

The Institute of Museums and Library Services, created in 1996 by Congress, supports libraries and museums across the United States.



Credit: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin

A man enters the building that houses the offices of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), Thursday, March 20, 2025, in Washington.

Author: Sophie Rosenthal  
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WASHINGTON — The American Libraries Association is suing President Trump to stop funding cuts to the Institute of Museums and Library Services.

In a March 14 executive order called "Continuing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy," Trump ordered seven government entities be eliminated or stripped down to the most minimal performance. One of those named in the order is the IMLS. The agency, created in 1996 by Congress, supports libraries and museums across the United States. Despite having support from every previous president throughout its existence — including Trump himself during his first term — this order seeks to close the agency.

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Now, the ALA, along with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the largest union representing museum and library workers, both represented by Democracy Forward, is arguing that only Congress can dismantle the agency and that the Trump administration's attempts to shutter IMLS will cut programs that are protected by law.

According to the complaint, after the executive order, DOGE fired nearly all IMLS staff members and began canceling grants. On Friday, the suit says, Acting IMLS Director Keith Sonderling fired all 23 National Museum and Library Services Board members.

ALA and AFSCME say that the several grants required by law have been canceled already, and argue that it is only a matter of time until all grants that fund libraries across the country are canceled. Even if they are not, the organizations argue in the suit, the remaining 12 IMLS employees will not be able to process grant applications and payments effectively with such a severely reduced workforce.

One problem with canceling grants or making it much harder to obtain payments is that many of the libraries have already spent the funds and are relying on reimbursements from IMLS. Without those funds, the complaint argues, "local and state libraries will suffer an immediate and irreparable inability to pay vendors or staff hired in reliance on IMLS' promise to make these reimbursements." Outside of grants, the IMLS has stopped providing its typical daily support and advice to local and state libraries, the complaint says.

The two groups are asking the court to issue a preliminary injunction to stop actions to shut down IMLS operations and take all steps necessary to restore IMLS, employees and grantees, reopen the office to staff, restore computer systems and webpages, and restore all funding for grants, cooperative agreements and contracts.

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