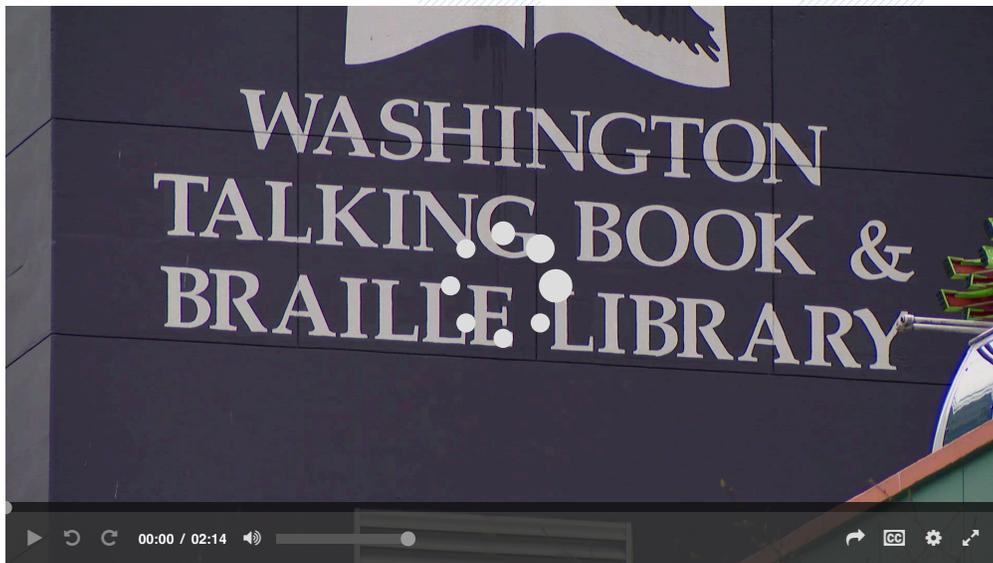


LOCAL NEWS

Washington State Library loses \$3.9 million in federal funding, impacting several libraries statewide

The federal funding cut represented about one-third of the state library's annual budget of \$12 million.



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SEATTLE — Staff at libraries run by the state are encountering what they have feared most: Millions of dollars in federal grants are getting pulled.

Visitors and staff at [Washington Talking Book and Braille Library](#) (WTBBL) in Seattle’s South Lake Union neighborhood are feeling things out as a new chapter begins.

“That’s definitely something I’m afraid of,” Shannon Curry said. “I love my job. I’ve worked here for 12 years, and it’s been kind of my life.”

Curry considers working at WTBBL as a dream job, especially for a bookworm like herself who’s blind.

"It's access to books," Curry said. "It's opening a whole world that might not otherwise be open."

But now that the library, along with several other state-run libraries, could be impacted.

"Don't love not knowing what's going to happen day to day," Curry said.

The [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) sent a notice last week, informing the [Washington State Library](#) (WSL) its grant is being terminated effective April 1. According to the letter, this termination is to "in alignment with the agency's updated priorities and the President's Executive Order 14238, Continuing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy, issued on March 14, 2025."

"Shocked, flabbergasted, angry, all those things crossed my mind," said Sara Jones, the top librarian in the state, in charge of WSL. Jones said the grant was for \$3.9 million. That's about one-third of the state library's annual budget of \$12 million.

"I'm really struggling with how we're going to fill that hole," Jones said. "And more importantly, how we're going to provide services that people really need."

Consequences of losing funding include six key areas in jeopardy:

- **No eBooks:** Smaller libraries won't afford digital collections.
- **Fewer resources:** Loss of research databases, training, and AskWA chat service.
- **Rural libraries at risk:** Many small libraries depend on WSL for websites, broadband, and technical help.
- **Prison and hospital libraries:** Institutional libraries would be endangered.
- **Staff cuts:** Jobs supported by federal funding would be eliminated.
- **End of innovative projects:** Programs like tabletop gaming grants and digital newspaper pilots would stop.

These are outcomes that Jones hopes to avoid, as she pleads with the public for help.

"If people will say that their library matters and that they will tell elected officials that," Jones said. "I think that's the way we'll do something about this."

Jones, along with another state official, sent a letter Friday to Members of the Washington state Congressional Delegation urging them to take action as they shared their concerns about the impact these cuts will have.

Larger library systems like Seattle and Sno-Isle Libraries said they primarily rely on local funding rather than federal funding. So, their services won't be significantly impacted.

KING 5 received this statement from Eric Howard, executive director, Sno-Isle Libraries:

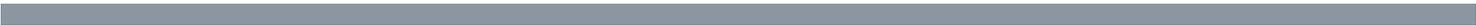
"Libraries across the nation operate as part of a collaborative network, with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) serving as the lead federal agency supporting libraries. Recent actions have significantly disrupted IMLS operations, including an Executive Order suspending operations, decisions to terminate existing grant programs, and placing IMLS staff on paid administrative leave, resulting in halted federal support for libraries nationwide. These actions will have far-reaching consequences, especially for smaller, rural, and tribal libraries that rely heavily on federal funding.

While Sno-Isle Libraries does not directly rely on IMLS grants for daily operations, changes to IMLS would resonate throughout our interconnected library ecosystem. The IMLS provides funding support, in big and small ways, for most of the nation's 125,000 public, school, academic, and special libraries in all 50 states. All libraries benefit from the research and work to develop innovative programs or new skills for library staff.

The library staff at IMLS makes libraries across the country better each day and helps train library staff in best practices. The Washington State Library utilizes IMLS funding to implement projects and services statewide, including digital learning and public library infrastructure. Two examples are the [Washington State Talking Book and Braille Library](#) and the [WA Rural Heritage community digital archives](#). Both are statewide services supported by IMLS grants.”

KING 5 received a statement from a spokesperson with Seattle Public Library:

“The Seattle Public Library is deeply concerned about the administration's decision to eliminate IMLS state block grant funding to support Washington state libraries. Multiple studies have shown that libraries provide taxpayers a strong return on investment, leading to notably improved educational and economic outcomes for the communities we serve. Considering IMLS funding represents less than .003% of the annual federal budget, and costs taxpayers about 75 cents per capita, these cuts do not appear to be an attempt to eliminate wasteful spending, but instead an attempt to limit and devalue our centers of reading, learning, and free thought for communities in Washington and elsewhere.”



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