

Attorney General Mayes Sues Trump Administration to Protect Libraries and Museums

Friday, April 4, 2025

PHOENIX – Attorney General Mayes today joined a coalition of 20 other attorneys general in suing the Trump administration to stop the dismantling of three federal agencies that provide services and funding supporting public libraries and museums. In March, the Trump administration issued an Executive Order that would dismantle federal agencies created by Congress that collectively provide hundreds of millions of dollars for programs in every state.

“In communities across Arizona, libraries aren’t just a place to borrow books—they’re a lifeline,” said **Attorney General Mayes**. “From high-speed internet access to job training and after-school programs, our libraries rely on federal support to serve the Arizonans who depend on and benefit from them. Stripping that support away will widen the divide between the haves and the have-nots—and would especially devastate youth literacy programs that help Arizona’s kids learn to read, grow, and succeed. I’ll keep fighting to ensure elite authoritarian politicians in Washington don’t rip away critical resources from Arizonans.”

As a result of this Executive Order, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) – one of the targeted agencies – has placed almost its entire staff on administrative leave and will cut hundreds of grants for state libraries and museums. The lawsuit filed by Attorney General Mayes and the coalition seeks to stop the targeted destruction of the IMLS and two other agencies targeted in the administration’s EO that millions of Americans rely on, especially those in underserved communities.

Earlier this week, Secretary of State Adrian Fontes detailed the effects the cuts would have on Arizonans:

“Stepping into a library is like shaking hands with an old friend. It’s reliable, steady, and filled with trusted wisdom,” said **Secretary of State Adrian Fontes**. “This lawsuit is for Arizona’s 3 million library card holders, who in 2023 alone visited the library 14 million times.”

In Arizona, IMLS funding is vital to statewide initiatives and direct support for local libraries. The Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records (LAPR) is still assessing just how deep the impact of funding cuts will go, but the consequences are already clear: contracts have been terminated for LAPR staff who deliver Digital Navigator services, a support that many communities rely on.

IMLS funds cover some or all the salaries for key LAPR staff who run these programs and ensure they reach the people who need them. Since 2020, the Arizona State Library has stewarded over \$18 million in IMLS funds to preserve our state’s history and expand access to essential services. These dollars do not pay for base library operations but sustain specific, high-impact programming.

In 2024 alone, the Library Development division managed over \$3,800,000 in Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) initiatives and projects through IMLS to support programs including:

- **Access to Electronic Resources:** Collaborative digital collections, databases, and eZines across the 15 county library systems

- **Arizona Memory Project:** Online access to historical records from Arizona’s archives, libraries, and museums
- **Arizona Reading Program:** Literacy development programming for all ages
- **Connect Arizona:** Free broadband and tech support through trained Digital Navigators
- **Youth Services:** Informal learning and educational programming for school-aged children
- **Summer Library Institute:** Professional development for staff from small and rural libraries
- **Legal Resources:** Access to state legal and legislative history materials
- **E-rate Support:** Assistance for libraries applying for discounted internet and telecommunications services

In 2024, IMLS invested \$180 million in libraries nationwide under its Grants to States Program. The administration’s action will threaten hundreds of library staff across the country that provide essential services to their communities.

“This is nothing less than an assault on the preservation of Arizona’s history and the education of future generations,” said **Attorney General Mayes**. “Slashing funding for our libraries and museums is a short-sighted and destructive act by an authoritarian government that shows no regard for the pursuit of knowledge, truth, or our shared heritage. These institutions safeguard the stories of who we are—and who we aspire to be. Tearing them down will do real harm to our democracy.”

Attorney General Mayes and the coalition argue that the Executive Order violates the Constitution and the Administrative Procedure Act by eliminating the programs of agencies without any regard for the laws and regulations that govern each source of federal funding. The coalition argues that the president cannot decide to unilaterally override laws governing federal spending, and that this Executive Order unconstitutionally overrides Congress’s power to decide how federal funds are spent.

Attorney General Mayes joins this lawsuit is led by the attorneys general of New York and Rhode Island. Also joining the lawsuit are the attorneys general of California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New Jersey, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin.

A copy of the complaint is available here (https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/court-filings/new-york-et-al-v-donald-j-trump-institute-of-museum-and-library-services-et-al-complaint-2025_0.pdf).

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