



AFSCME fights White House decision to gut Institute of Museum and Library Services

Photo credit: Getty Images

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AFSCME and The American Library Association (ALA) are going to court to challenge the Trump administration's gutting of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.



The lawsuit, filed on behalf of ALA and AFSCME by Democracy Forward and co-counsel Gair Gallo Eberhard LLP, asks the U.S. District Court in Washington to block the dismantling of the IMLS as directed by a **Trump executive order**.

The lawsuit comes as AFSCME and ALA commemorate National Library Week. AFSCME, which enables 45,000 cultural workers to secure a voice on the job, represents more library and museum workers than any other union. The ALA is the world's largest library association.

IMLS provides **valuable assistance** to libraries and museums nationwide. But it's functionally no more. The administration **has put its entire staff on leave**.

"Libraries and museums contain our collective history and knowledge, while also providing safe spaces for learning, cultural expression and access to critical public resources," **said AFSCME President Lee Saunders**. "They represent the heart of our communities, and the cultural workers who keep these institutions running enrich thousands of lives every day."

"Library workers do everything from helping people apply for jobs to administering life-saving care, all while facing increasing violence on the job. Their work deserves support, not cuts," Saunders added. "We're suing to stop the wrongful closure of the Institute of Museum and Library Services and protect this critical resource for our communities."

ALA President Cindy Hohl struck a similar note.

"Libraries play an important role in our democracy, from preserving history to providing access to government information, advancing literacy and civic engagement, and offering access to a variety of perspectives," Hohl said.

"These values are worth defending. 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," Hohl said.

IMLS was first created and funded by Congress in 1996 and charged with supporting America's libraries and museums. The agency has had bipartisan support throughout its history, having been reauthorized under the Clinton, George W. Bush, Obama and Trump administrations.

The lawsuit argues that cutting programs at IMLS will violate the law by eliminating programs Congress has provided funding for and directed IMLS to undertake.

Shortly after the executive order was announced, the ALA sent **a letter to the new IMLS acting director**, warning not to cut any programs at the agency protected by law.











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