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Attorney General Bonta Files Lawsuit Challenging Trump Administration's Attempt to Dismantle Several Federal Agencies, Protecting California's Libraries and Museums

Press Release / *Attorney General Bonta Files Lawsuit Challenging Trump Admin...*

Friday, April 4, 2025

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California's 12th lawsuit against the Trump Administration seeks to protect federal workers and the essential services they provide to support American families, businesses, workers, and our cultural heritage

OAKLAND – California Attorney General Bonta today joined a coalition of 21 attorneys general in filing a lawsuit challenging the Trump Administration's unlawful Executive Order No. 14238 (Closure Order) directing several Congressionally-established agencies, including the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Minority Business

Development Agency, and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, to eliminate every component and function not required by statute and reduce their statutorily required functions and associated staff to the minimum required by law. The President also ordered the Office of Management and Budget to deny these agencies authorization to spend federal funds already allocated by Congress for any functions beyond the minimum required by statute. The March 14, 2025 Closure Order is the Trump Administration's latest attempt to unlawfully dismantle agencies that Americans rely on. This time, he is targeting agencies that provide services and funding supporting public libraries and museums, workers, and minority-owned businesses nationwide. The agencies subject to the Closure Order collectively provide billions of dollars in funding to States to support libraries, museums, and disadvantaged businesses, provide services that States rely on to peaceably resolve labor disputes, and more. In the lawsuit, the attorneys general argue that the Closure Order and its implementation are unlawful and cannot stand.

"The Trump Administration is once again violating the U.S. Constitution and the rule of law by attempting to unilaterally shut down agencies the President doesn't like, including agencies that give the public access to facts, knowledge, and cultural heritage for free or at low cost," **said Attorney General Bonta**. "Dismantling these agencies would have a devastating impact on the public and on states across the nation — they provide important services for Americans and collectively provide billions of dollars to States to support libraries and museums, innovation and entrepreneurship for disadvantaged businesses, and help resolve labor disputes. The Order also threatens the livelihoods of federal workers employed at these agencies, once again flying in the face of the President's promise to ease the financial burden felt by American families. The Trump Administration's actions to strip these agencies down to their studs is blatantly illegal. As the President continues to flout his duty to the American people and the rule of law, I will continue to stand with my fellow attorneys general to uphold the Constitution and protect the crucial services that Californians rely on."

Following the Closure Order, the President directed agencies to report within one week whether they had achieved “full compliance” with the order, despite the fact that “full compliance” means near-total incapacitation of these agencies. As of April 4, the functions of at least three of these agencies have been completely incapacitated. For example, the Minority Business Development Agency has placed all but five of its more than 40 personnel on administrative leave and instructed them to wind down the agency’s remaining work. The Minority Business Development Agency supports more than 70 public-private business centers throughout the nation that provide business consultation, including centers that are specifically geared toward manufacturing businesses and businesses in rural areas. Three of these centers are located in California: in Los Angeles, Sacramento, and San Jose. In 2023 alone, the agency served more than 2,000 entrepreneurs who, in turn, created nearly 19,000 jobs. The President’s unlawful actions have also incapacitated the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, an agency that drives economic growth and innovation by mediating labor disputes in industries that affect commerce and negotiating collective bargaining agreements. The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service has slashed its staff from roughly 200 to fewer than 15 individuals and ordered its staff to stop mediating labor disputes for public center entities, handling grievances arising out of collective bargaining agreements, or conducting public training or education efforts—essentially abandoning many of the core functions of this nearly 80-year-old agency.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has also been materially harmed by the President’s Closure Order. IMLS supports libraries, museums, and related institutions through grant funding, research, and policy development, with the aim of advancing innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. IMLS’ largest funding program —and the largest source of federal funding for library services — is its Grants to States Program. 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. As of April 1,

IMLS placed 85% of its staff on administrative leave, dramatically curtailed its administration of hundreds of grants and grant applications, and terminated statutorily mandated grant awards to several States.

The gutting of IMLS will cause destructive harm to California's libraries and museums and the communities they serve. For example, California libraries employ approximately 17,000 employees who staff the State's 1,127 libraries and serve 23 million California library card holders. The California State Library budget for this year included \$15.7 million in IMLS funding allocated for staffing and continued operations. Over the last 40 years, IMLS funds have paid for multiple statewide library programs, including support for tutors helping adults and children read, write, and learn English; summer reading and activity programs; and services that help feed low-income children when school is out. IMLS funds also pay for continuing education for librarians and library workers, a 300,000-title eBook library accessible to all Californians, and digital efforts to protect California's cultural heritage and local history. If the Closure Order stands, all functions and staff positions paid for with IMLS funding will cease to exist. The loss of these services would particularly harm lower-income families, seniors, and veterans who rely on libraries to help them navigate an increasingly digital world. The Trump Administration's actions also threaten grants that support California's incredible museums from the San Diego Zoo to the Exploratorium in San Francisco to Los Angeles' Autry Museum of the American West.

In today's lawsuit, Attorney General Bonta and a multistate coalition demonstrate that President Trump's directive to shut down these agencies, and the steps taken to implement that directive, are unlawful and must be reversed. The coalition establishes that the Trump Administration cannot undo the many acts of Congress that authorize these agencies, dictate their responsibilities, and appropriate funds for the agencies to administer. The Trump Administration's attempt to do so through the Closure Order violates the Executive Branch's obligation to take care that the

law is faithfully executed. Further, as the complaint details, the Closure Order and its implementation by the agencies violate both the Appropriations Clause and Separation of Powers Clause of the U.S. Constitution and broadly exceed the narrow discretion the Executive possesses under the Impoundment Control Act.

Attorney General Bonta joined the lawsuit alongside the attorneys general of New York, Rhode Island, Hawaii, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin.

A copy of the lawsuit is available [here](#).

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