



AG Attorney General

Attorney General Nessel Sues Trump Administration to Protect Libraries and Museums

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LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel today joined a coalition of 20 other attorneys general in [suing the Trump administration \(PDF\)](#) to stop the dismantling of three federal agencies that provide services and funding supporting public libraries and museums, workers, and minority-owned businesses nationwide.

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. 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 Nessel 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.

“Once again, the President has signed an executive order that clearly oversteps the powers of his office, tramples the role of Congress in establishing and funding agencies, and commits unnecessary and potentially irreparable harms to Michiganders,” said

Nessel. “These agencies serve important roles and their destruction could reshape whole communities. The absolute vitality of local public and school libraries to our children's education and development just cannot be overstated, in addition to the countless other benefits a local library provides.”

This Executive Order is the administration's latest attempt to dismantle federal agencies in defiance of Congress. Attorney General Nessel and the coalition are seeking to stop the dismantling of three agencies targeted in the administration's Executive Order:

1. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which supports museums and libraries nationwide through grantmaking, research, and policy development;
2. The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), which promotes the growth and inclusion of minority-owned businesses through federal financial assistance programs; and
3. The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), which promotes peaceful resolution of labor disputes.

As Attorney General Nessel and the coalition assert in the lawsuit, dismantling these agencies will have devastating effects on communities throughout Michigan and nationwide that rely on them to provide important services, including funding their libraries, promoting minority-owned businesses, and protecting workers' rights.

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.

Michigan received \$4,788,124 under the IMLS Grants to States program in 2024, and anticipated receiving approximately \$4,775,000 under the program in 2025. The \$4.788 million in 2024 federal funding accounted for 75% of all funding to support statewide library services, resources, and support to Michigan libraries across the State and their users. These funds primarily supported statewide resources and programs that benefit school libraries, public libraries, and academic libraries and all their users.

Per the State Librarian for the Library of Michigan, this Executive Order and consequent reduction in IMLS staff will result in their inability to administer financial awards and programs, causing considerable harm to Michigan and the Library of Michigan, and significant harm upon tribal libraries, academic libraries, public libraries, and non-profits serving libraries throughout Michigan that receive support and competitive grants through IMLS. Training resources for library staff offered by the State Library of Michigan will be greatly reduced, and as a result of this Executive Order, the Library of Michigan has already been forced to cancel a summer grant program primarily used to support small and rural libraries. The program typically provides approximately 130-150 grants each year.

Michigan's MeL and MeLCat programs are perhaps the most significantly and existentially imperiled by the attempted illegal teardown of the IMLS. MeLCat is the program that enables Michigan residents to easily identify and request convenient, quick, and free delivery of materials from other participating Michigan libraries to their own library for pick up, loaning well over a million items a year between participating libraries. In Michigan, 368 out of 397 public libraries, and 52 out of 79 academic libraries, use MeLCat as an integral part of their daily circulation of library materials— in 2024, libraries shared 1,061,217 items, an average of 2,907 books a day, and Michigan residents accessed 19,236,855 articles and journals through the vital MeLCat program. This service is of particular importance to K-12 students and higher education students, and is used in every county of the state.

In addition to the MeLCat program, federal funds to Michigan support:

- High-quality, resource-filled summer reading manuals from the Collaborative Summer Library Program, provided by the Library of Michigan to public libraries for early literacy support. Also support for the Ready to Read early literacy program that helps provide quality early literacy programming and training to children's librarians as they work with families in their communities;
- A collection of thousands of non-fiction and reference eBooks for K-12 students and teachers, college-level academics, and professionals;
- A comprehensive, interactive tests, tutorials, and workforce development website with occupational, licensing, and academic practice tests and tutorials for K-16 and job seekers, from the GED to the GRE;
- Digitization support from The Library of Michigan, via participation in statewide digitization efforts such as the Michigan Digital Preservation Network, Michigan newspaper digitization work at CMU, and grants funding local history and special collections work; and
- Various grants through the Library of Michigan, such as Public Library Services grants for public libraries in the areas of technology, children & 7 teen programs, and literacy, and Improving Access to Information grants for public and academic libraries to increase capacity to provide access to library collections and information.

In addition, the Trump administration has cut the staff of MBDA from approximately 40 to just five individuals and has effectively stopped issuing new grants, hurting vulnerable small businesses across the country. The FMCS has slashed its staff from roughly 200 to fewer than 15 individuals and announced the termination of several of its core programs, making it harder for unionized workers to secure their rights.

Attorney General Nessel 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.

Joining the lawsuit are the attorneys general of Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawai'i, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin.

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