

# L I T E R A R Y H U B



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## 21 Attorneys General are suing to save America's libraries.



By James Folta

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On Friday, a group of 21 state Attorneys General from across the US announced a lawsuit challenging the Trump and Musk cuts to federal agencies. The team of state AGs are suing to to protect a number of

organizations, including the Institute of Museum and Library Services which was recently forced to put its staff on leave and began cutting grants. The cuts will be dire for state library systems, which get \$160 million annually from the Institute, an amount that will cut one-third to one-half of these library systems' total budgets.

In New York, for example, the library cuts would be devastating.

According to the New York Times:

New York State received \$8 million [from IMLS] in 2024, which has been used to help fund literacy programs, improve internet access and support training for 200,000 staff members across the state's 7,000 libraries. It also paid the salaries of 55 employees at the New York State Library in Albany, two-thirds of the total, according to a news release.

The suit is making the case that Trump and Musk's cuts are obviously unconstitutional and violate federal law:

Attorney General James 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.

This lawsuit is led by New York, Rhode Island, and Hawaii's Attorneys General, and joining the suit are the state AGs from Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin.

In addition to the IMLS, the suit is hoping to reverse the dismantling of the Minority Business Development Agency, which supports minority-owned businesses, and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, which mediates labor disputes.

How much will these lawsuits be able to affect things, when Trump and his hogs continue to ignore the courts, and when the Supreme Court is a committed backstop to their every fascist impulse?

I applaud what these state lawyers are doing, but I no longer trust that the courts will save us. We need a lot more than the hope of a pat, *Law & Order* episode ending. The ALA has a guide for ways to take action and help out libraries. Mass demonstrations, especially the creative targeting of Tesla, have gotten some results. Simply saying no has yielded wins too — in my backyard, refusing to comply has saved congestion pricing from an immediate threat. And I'm continually inspired by the bravery and solidarity of the students fighting for Palestine, who are putting their bodies on the line for a better world.

Because the world the fascists are proposing is worse: it is barren and violent and cold. There is no money for libraries, or medicine, or food, no space for kindness. But there is always time to be cruel and vindictive, and there are of course billions of dollars available to build more prisons and detention facilities and billions more to arm a bloody genocide. This is no way to live.

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