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From the Librarian: Federal library funding in jeopardy

By Heather Urtz Amendolare

Apr 8, 2025



Heather Urtz Amendolare From the Librarian



The news feed moves so quickly that we often miss important announcements or events that affect us. In today’s column, I’m writing about an action that you may have missed that has a direct impact at both the federal and state level on programs and services that the library provides.

On March 14, President Trump signed an executive order that would dismantle the Institute of Museum and Library Services, established by Congress in 1996. The order would cut staff, programs and funds for museum and library services at the federal level that are vital to local libraries. On April 4, the attorneys general from 21 states, including New York, filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration to stop the dismantling of IMLS and two other federal agencies.

Federal IMLS aid helps state libraries provide services to local libraries that they could not otherwise offer. For example, state libraries use IMLS aid to provide Libby or Hoopla digital books and movies for download, send bookmobiles to reach isolated communities, provide digital literacy programs for seniors, offer large-print collections for people with visual impairments, establish early childhood literacy programs and offer GED and ESL programs.

The New York State Library receives \$8.1 million a year through the IMLS Aid to States Program. With this annual grant, the State Library provides wide-reaching, vital statewide services including the Talking Book and Braille Library, the NYS Archives and their research resources, the Documentary Heritage Program of the State of New York, digital collections, summer reading and learning, online and in-person learning opportunities offered by the State Library and administration of the NYS Construction Aid Program for libraries.

I have been fortunate to receive two IMLS grants for professional training sessions. Most recently, I became a certified early literacy trainer through the “Ready to Read at New York State Libraries” program. As trainers, we work with public libraries across the state to improve the quality of early learning services, providing families and caregivers with the knowledge they need to prepare young children for their school years. If you have visited the Village Library recently, you will notice a growing and vibrant early literacy program in action, in part thanks to the education and training I received through IMLS.

We have seen that programs that support diversity, equity, and inclusion are being abolished. Most of the talking points around DEI refer only to race, gender and sexual identity. Yet DEI, especially for libraries, is so much more — it's about providing resources and support to underrepresented or vulnerable populations. This may include people with special physical or mental needs, low-income populations, early childhood programs, senior citizens and housebound communities in geographically isolated areas. If you think about it, you or someone you know is likely in one of these populations. “Equitable library programs” in DEI conversation is much more complex than the buzzwords.

The Institute for Museum and Library Services makes a real, concrete difference in the lives of Americans every day. The president's executive order puts all of those services at risk. Reimbursement for grant funding approved last year, which has already been spent, is being denied. Libraries across the nation, will endure undue financial burdens as this is untangled.

To advocate for the role that libraries play across the country and in our state, visit the American Library Association's website, www.ala.org, or the New York Library Association's website, nyla.org, to learn how you can express your support. We greatly appreciate the support our state representatives have given our library, like state Sen. Peter Oberacker and Assembly Member Chris Tague, whose joint resolution last spring celebrated the Village Library's 75th year as a chartered public library.

As a personal note to close: I hope we can remember that there are real people behind the numbers and data, doing their best with limited resources and that libraries are there to meet everyone's needs — and that includes you.

Library hours: 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Thursday, Friday; 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday; 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday.

Heather Urtz Amendolare is director of the Village Library of Cooperstown. Her bi-weekly column appears in the community section of The Cooperstown Crier. Her columns also may also be found online at www.coopercrier.com/community.

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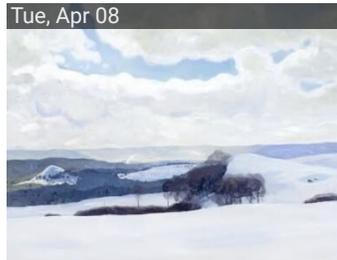
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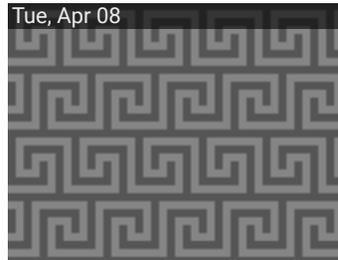
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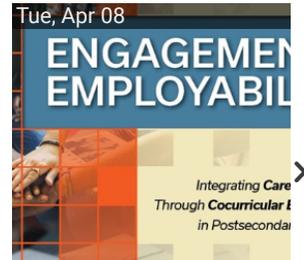
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