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Office of the Vermont Attorney General

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Attorney General Clark Sues Trump Administration to Protect Libraries and Museums

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Coalition Suing to Stop Dismantling of Federal Agencies That Support Libraries, Museums, Minority-Owned Businesses, and Workers

Attorney General Charity Clark today joined a coalition of 20 other state attorneys general in suing the Trump administration to stop the dismantling of three federal agencies that provide services and funding supporting public libraries and museums, workers, and minority-owned businesses nationwide. The three agencies include Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), and Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS).

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 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 Clark and the coalition seeks to stop the targeted destruction of the IMLS, and two other agencies targeted in the administration’s Executive Order that millions of Americans rely on, especially those in underserved communities.

“Vermonters know that libraries are the heart of our towns and rural communities, and this executive order would threaten their continued health. For some, gutting these grants could jeopardize their very survival,” said Attorney General Clark. “As Vermont’s Attorney General, I am proud to stand up for our libraries and against this unconstitutional action. As chair of the board of my local library, I know how important Vermont’s town libraries are to children, job seekers, elders, and all of us. The fiscal impact of the Trump Administration’s attempt to cut MBDA and FMCS is smaller, but it is certain to create harms and losses, and it is incredibly disappointing.”

This Executive Order is the administration's latest attempt to dismantle federal agencies in defiance of Congress. Attorney General Clark 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 Clark and the coalition assert in the lawsuit, dismantling these agencies will have devastating effects on communities throughout Vermont and the nation that rely on them to provide important services to the public, including funding their libraries, promoting minority-owned businesses, and protecting workers' rights.

"Eliminating the Institute of Museum and Library Services would irreparably harm Vermont's libraries—particularly in our rural and under-served communities—by stripping away critical funding that supports access to information, literacy programs, digital equity, and community connections," said Mary Danko, President of the Vermont Library Association. "Without IMLS support, our libraries would become depleted community spaces, unable to meet the educational, economic, and civic needs of the people they serve. This action not only threatens the intellectual and cultural fabric of Vermont, but also violates the government's obligation to ensure equitable access to knowledge and opportunity for all. Libraries are where democracy lives—open to all, grounded in truth, and powered by curiosity. Undermining them is undermining the people's voice."

Attorney General Clark and the coalition argue in their lawsuit 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.

In filing today's lawsuit, Attorney General Clark joins the attorneys general of Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, and Wisconsin.

A copy of the complaint can be found [here](#).

Today’s lawsuit is the ninth case Attorney General Clark has brought against the Trump administration since President Trump took office in January. For more information on actions taken by the Attorney General on behalf of Vermonters, visit our website at ago.vermont.gov/ago-actions.

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Home

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Contracts

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Make a payment

Policies

Press Releases

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[Consumer Complaint Help](#)

[Online Scam Form](#)

[CAP Connection Blog](#)

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