

New Lawsuit: American Library Association (ALA), AFSCME Challenge Trump Administration Gutting of Institute of Museum and Library Services

April 8, 2025 by [Gary Price](#)

[Ed. Note: infoDOCKET Coverage of the Lawsuit Filed by 21 Attorneys General Over Cuts to IMLS, Federal Agencies \(April 4, 2025\)](#)

From a [Joint Statement by ALA, AFSCME, and Democracy Forward](#):

The American Library Association (ALA), the largest library association in the world, and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the largest union representing museum and library workers, are challenging the Trump administration's gutting of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) – a non-partisan and independent agency dedicated to supporting and funding museums and libraries and museums and the crucial community services they provide in every state across the country. [The lawsuit](#), filed on behalf of ALA and AFSCME by Democracy Forward and co-counsel Gair Gallo Eberhard LLP, asks the court to block the dismantling of the IMLS as directed by a [Trump executive order](#).

"Libraries play an important role in our democracy, from preserving history to providing access to government information, advancing literacy and civic engagement, and offering access to a variety of perspectives," said American Library Association President Cindy Hohl. "These values are worth defending. We will not allow extremists to threaten our democracy by eliminating programs at IMLS and harming the children and communities who rely on libraries and the services and opportunities they provide."

"Libraries and museums contain our collective history and knowledge, while also providing safe spaces for learning, cultural expression and access to critical public resources," said AFSCME President Lee Saunders. "They represent the heart of our communities, and the cultural workers who keep these institutions running enrich thousands of lives every day. Library workers do everything from helping people apply for jobs to administering lifesaving care all while facing increasing violence on the job. Their work deserves support, not cuts. On behalf of the 42,000 AFSCME cultural workers, we're suing to stop the wrongful closure of the Institute of Museum and Library Services and protect this critical resource for our communities."

IMLS was first created and funded by Congress in 1996 and charged with supporting America's libraries and museums. The agency has had bipartisan support throughout its history, having been reauthorized under the Clinton, George W. Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations. IMLS is bound by laws requiring that the agency conduct certain activities to support libraries and report on important issues to Congress. The complaint argues that cutting programs at IMLS will violate the law by eliminating programs Congress has provided funding for and directed IMLS to undertake.

"Libraries are vital for people and communities across our nation. Attacking libraries and those who ensure the continuity of their services is yet another move by the Trump administration that does nothing to make Americans' lives better or easier," said Skye Perryman, President and CEO of Democracy Forward. "Reducing the IMLS workforce would undermine the agency's ability to faithfully execute its legal obligations, and harm the operations of libraries. Democracy Forward is honored to continue our work with librarians to protect these important educational institutions in our country."

Shortly after the executive order was announced, the ALA sent [a letter to the new IMLS acting director](#), warning not to cut any programs at the agency protected by law.

This case continues Democracy Forward's record of working with communities, parents, and libraries to defend the freedom to read. That work has previously included efforts in [Arkansas](#), where Democracy Forward represented a coalition of librarians, booksellers, and readers who successfully prevented portions of an Arkansas law that threatens to criminalize librarians and booksellers from taking effect and is asking a court to permanently stop the law from being enforced; [Florida](#), where

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	
AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, 225 N. Michigan Ave. Suite 1300 Chicago, Illinois 60601,	COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO, 1625 E. Street NW Washington, DC 20006,	
Plaintiff,	
v.	
KEITH SONDERLING, in his capacity as Acting Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, 955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Suite 4000 Washington, DC 20004,	Case No. _____
INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES, 955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Washington, DC 20004,	
DONALD TRUMP, in his capacity as President of the United States of America, 3600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009,	
AMY GLEASON, in her capacity as Acting Administrator of the U.S. DOGE Service and U.S. DOGE Service Temporary Organization, 736 Jackson Place NW Washington, DC 20003,	
U.S. DOGE SERVICE, 736 Jackson Place NW Washington, DC 20003,	

Democracy Forward represented the Florida Education Association, Florida Freedom to Read Project, and Families for Strong Public Schools to challenge the DeSantis administration's actions that shutter classroom libraries and undermine public education in Florida; and in [Alabama](#), where Democracy Forward is representing a group of Alabama families and librarians with a broad array of political and religious backgrounds in a suit to stop policies approved by the library board that threaten to keep constitutionally protected books like *To Kill a Mockingbird* off of public library shelves.

Direct to [Full Text of Complaint](#)

Direct to [Case Docket + Additional Filings](#)

Additional infoDOCKET Coverage re: IMLS

- [Coverage of the Lawsuit Filed by 21 Attorneys General Over Cuts to IMLS, Federal Agencies\(Filed on April 4, 2025\)](#)
- [Statements in Response to Executive Order Impacting the Institute of Museum and Library Services \(IMLS\)](#)

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About Gary Price

Gary Price (gprice@gmail.com) is a librarian, writer, consultant, and frequent conference speaker based in the Washington D.C. metro area. He earned his MLIS degree from Wayne State University in Detroit. Price has won several awards including the SLA Innovations in Technology Award and Alumnus of the Year from the Wayne St. University

Library and Information Science Program. From 2006-2009 he was Director of Online Information Services at Ask.com.