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YORK COUNTY COAST STAR

Maine libraries sound alarm over potential federal funding cuts: 'It's a scary time'

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Key Points AI-assisted summary ⓘ

- Maine librarians are concerned about the potential impact of President Trump's proposal to eliminate the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).
 - The IMLS provides funding for a variety of library services, including internet access, interlibrary loans, and programs for the blind and visually impaired.
 - Library officials say that the loss of federal funding would force them to make cuts that would impact services and resources for Maine residents.
 - The Maine Attorney General has joined a lawsuit challenging the executive order, arguing that it violates Congress's authority on federal spending.
 - The White House says that the executive order is part of an effort to reduce bureaucracy and deliver better services for the American people.
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Local Maine librarians are highlighting the potential impact on their communities as President Donald Trump proposes [eliminating the federal agency](#) that supports their efforts to provide vital information and resources.

Michelle Conners, executive director of [Kennebunk Free Library](#), expressed concern about the possibility of her facility absorbing costs for internet service and interlibrary loans currently subsidized by the Maine State Library through federal funding.

"We'd need to make cuts at the local level that would likely affect our collection and hours," Conners said.

On March 14, Trump issued an [executive order](#) calling for the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) (IMLS) to be eliminated “to the maximum extent consistent with applicable law.” Through grants from the Library Services & Technology Act (LSTA), the institute supports libraries, museums, and archives throughout the nation and its territories.

The order states that the Institute must be reduced to its “statutory functions.” It also requires that “non-statutory components and functions ... shall be eliminated.”

According to Conners, the Maine State Library receives around \$1.5 million each year through the LSTA funding that the Institute provides. Conners said that the annual amount provides high-speed internet access to 243 libraries throughout the state and helps deliver books and materials to even more.

“I can’t think of another example where you get such a high return on an investment,” Conners said.

The IMLS was effectively [shuttered last week](#), and all work on approving federal grants for state, local and academic libraries was immediately halted.

Maine Attorney General Aaron Frey joined 20 other AGs in suing the Trump administration, arguing the executive order violates the Constitution by overriding Congress’s authority on federal spending. In 2024, IMLS invested \$180 million in libraries nationwide through its Grants to States Program.

The Maine Service Employees Association, Local 1989 of the SEIU, condemned Trump’s decision to dismantle the IMLS, emphasizing its vital support for libraries, especially for Mainers with visual impairments and other disabilities. The union urged Trump to rescind the executive order and called on Sen. Susan Collins to continue advocating for IMLS funding.

Union member Christopher Boynton, who coordinates circulation, outreach, and special services for the blind at the Maine State Library, called the offerings funded through the IMLS are a “lifeline” to the state’s elderly, disabled and homebound.

“With the loss of this funding, we will not have that staff and this critical service to some of our most vulnerable residents will not exist,” Boynton said.

It was not immediately known the impact the order would have on federal grants to states.

White House press aide Anna Kelly told USA TODAY “President Trump’s executive order is cutting bureaucracy and bloat to deliver better services for the American people.”

The Labor Department issued a statement to USA TODAY that said, “President Trump was given a clear mandate by the American people, and his Executive Order delivers on that by reducing federal bureaucracy. This restructure is a necessary step to fulfill that order and ensure hard-earned tax dollars are not diverted to discriminatory DEI initiatives or divisive, anti-American programming in our cultural institutions. These changes will strengthen IMLS’s ability to serve the American people with integrity and purpose.”

Libraries are under siege: [How Trump's cuts put community hubs in peril](#)

Maine libraries raise alarm over potential funding cuts

Libraries throughout the state have been spreading the word about how their communities benefit from federal funding that annually is provided to and distributed by the [Maine State Library](#).

[York Public Library](#) is one example. In a statement on its website, the library asserted that the IMLS represents just .0003% of the overall federal budget, a sum that results in more than 1.2 billion in-person uses of programs and services by patrons throughout the country every year.

“The elimination of these monies will negatively impact the services and resources Maine’s libraries provide to our residents,” the library stated.

York Public Library also noted that the LSTA funds also provide e-books and e-audiobooks to Mainers through a network called [CloudLibrary](#).

“York residents downloaded 12,500 items last year,” the library stated.

According to the library, the Institute’s funding also helps provide large-print and recorded books for patrons who are blind or visually impaired and help support online databases through Digital Maine Library, a resource to which patrons turn for assistance with homework, research, career development, and more.

The library also noted the funds help ensure professional development training for library staffers and help offer the “Books by Mail” program, which allows homebound individuals and Maine residents access to titles if there is not a library in their community.

On Thursday, Michelle Sampson, the executive director of the York Library, said she is “extremely concerned” about the effects that a loss of federal funding could have.

“Anybody who is at a library or museum or school is concerned,” Sampson said.

Sampson encouraged those who share her concerns to reach out to the legislators who represent them.

“Phone calls are always best,” she said.

Both Sampson and Jason Fennimore, the reference librarian at [Goodall Library in Sanford](#), particularly expressed concern for smaller, rural libraries that benefit from the federal funding that the Maine State Library disperses.

Both said funding for the statewide delivery service for interlibrary loans of books, movies, and more is crucial to libraries of all sizes, but especially smaller ones in remote regions of Maine.

If the services succumb to a lack of funding, “it’s really going to be a big blow” to those smaller, rural libraries that have fewer resources, Sampson said.

Fennimore said rural libraries likely would have to team up for interlibrary loans, with perhaps even staffers taking the place of the state's hired delivery vans to get books and films from place to place.

“It would almost annihilate rural libraries,” Fennimore said. “They’re too far apart.”

Noting the president's executive orders calling for cuts in federal funding in many areas of American life, Sampson called nowadays a “really scary time for a lot of people.”

“Libraries are not immune to that,” she said.