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FAQ: Executive Order Targeting IMLS

This set of frequently asked questions is intended to help library workers, library advocates, and library users understand this Executive Order.

FAQ: Executive Order Targeting IMLS



March 18, 2025

On Friday night, March 14, President Trump issued an [Executive Order](#) intended to dismantle the only federal agency dedicated to funding library services, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), as well as six other agencies. This set of frequently asked questions is intended to help library workers, library advocates, and library users understand this Executive Order.

What does this Executive Order do?

This White House announcement orders that seven agencies, including the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), be eliminated to the maximum extent of the law and the agencies are ordered to reduce their services and personnel to the minimum amount required to perform the functions required by law.

The announcement also orders the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to reject any budget requests from IMLS (and the other six named agencies) other than funds needed to shut down the agency.

What can I do?

We need every library supporter to show up and make their voices heard. Here are concrete, effective actions you can take now:

- [Send a message to your Senators and Representatives urging them to overturn the executive order and protect IMLS funding.](#)
- [Call your Senators and Representatives](#) urging them to overturn the executive order and protect IMLS funding.
- Send this [action alert](#) to five people in your network.
- Write a letter to the editor in your local newspaper explaining why IMLS is important and the impact of federal dollars on communities.
- [Share your story](#) for ALA's story collection about the impact of federal funding on your community.
- Sign up for future [action alerts from ALA](#).
- [Join ALA or renew your membership.](#)

- [Become a Supporter of the American Library Association](#)

Is IMLS being eliminated?

The clear intent of the Executive Order, as stated in the language of the order, is to eliminate IMLS.

The Executive Order does not directly eliminate the agency entirely. That would clearly exceed executive authority, because IMLS is established by law. Instead, the Executive Order aims to move as far toward eliminating the agency as possible. It requires that the agency only do what is "statutorily required," which means the actions required by current laws. At this time, it is not fully clear which agency functions the Administration will deem to be "statutorily required."

The announcement orders that the head of each agency submit a list of functions that they believe are statutorily required to the White House's Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Since the president has stated in his Executive Order that his intent is to eliminate IMLS to the fullest extent that he is able, it is reasonable to conclude that the Office of Management and Budget will take a narrow interpretation of what is statutorily required.

In addition, the order directs OMB to reject funding requests from IMLS "except insofar as necessary to effectuate an expected termination" of the agency. Therefore, it is expected that the president's future budget requests will propose to eliminate to IMLS.

What statutes apply to IMLS?

The Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA) is the law that established IMLS. MLSA codifies the agency's programs under the Library Services & Technology Act (LSTA) and the Museum Services Act, as well as other agency activities like data collection and the National Museum and Library Services Board. MLSA was first enacted in 1996 and has been reauthorized on a bipartisan basis several times since then – most recently in 2018, which was signed into law by President Trump. As described above, it is not yet clear which agency functions the Administration will deem to be "statutorily required."

In addition to MLSA, certain provisions of appropriations laws apply to IMLS. Congress provides funding to IMLS annually through appropriations laws, most recently in the law enacted on March 15, 2025. In addition to providing funding for federal agencies to carry out programs and activities, these laws also sometimes provide directions to the agencies.

Additionally, some provisions of law apply across all or several federal agencies, including IMLS. For instance, all executive agencies are required to comply with and implement the Freedom of Information Act. In addition, all federally funded education programs (which is considered to include libraries and museums) must comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

What does this mean for grants to libraries?

At this time, it is unclear how the executive order may impact current or future grant rounds.

But didn't Congress just fund IMLS?

On March 14th, the Senate passed and the president signed a continuing resolution for fiscal year 2025, which provides funding for IMLS through September 2025.

Although this continuing resolution provides funding for IMLS, President Trump has instead directed the agency's elimination all on the same day. This Executive Order usurps the intent of Congress's decision to provide funding for IMLS, which President Trump agreed to in signing that law.

What will happen to the IMLS staff?

The Trump Administration has pursued several strategies to reduce the federal workforce, including workers employed at IMLS. Some of these attempts have been subject to litigation and disallowed by the courts, while other efforts proceed. The March 14 executive order also aims to reduce, and eventually eliminate, the number of employees at IMLS. If the Trump Administration is allowed to proceed with a

broad interpretation of the March 14 executive order, it likely would result ultimately in the loss of employment for IMLS staff.

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What does this mean for libraries?

The intent to undercut and eliminate the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is extremely shortsighted and perilous for the millions of Americans who rely on our public, school, academic, and special libraries. Library funding draws less than 0.003% of the annual federal budget yet has enormous impact in communities nationwide. From technology classes for jobseekers to services for people with disabilities, from library delivery for older Americans to summer reading programs for families, IMLS funding makes a real, concrete difference in the lives of Americans every day. The president's executive order puts all of those services at risk.

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How can the executive order be stopped or limited?

- The March 14 executive order could be stopped or limited in the following ways:
 - Congress could enact a law that overrides the president's action.
 - A court can overturn provisions of the executive order, or actions taken to implement the executive order, that it finds to violate the Constitution or a federal law.
 - President Trump, or a future president, could rescind or modify the executive order, or direct that it be interpreted in ways that reduce the disruption of IMLS's activities and programs.
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What is ALA doing?

The American Library Association is fighting for IMLS to be preserved and to continue supporting our nation's 125,000 public, school, academic, and special libraries.

Our policy and advocacy team in Washington DC is working with partners and library supporters across the country to advocate for IMLS.

ALA leaders are raising awareness in the media of the devastating impact that eliminating IMLS will have on communities. ALA is also working with chapters to engage members of Congress in their state and to educate their elected officials on the impact of federal dollars to libraries on their constituents. Finally, we are mobilizing our members and library lovers everywhere to contact their members of Congress, and to make their voices heard.



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