

# ALA Sues Trump Administration Over Dismantling of IMLS

by [SLJ Staff](#)

Apr 08, 2025 | Filed in [News & Features](#)

The American Library Association is suing the Trump administration for its attempt to defund and destroy the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), an independent federal agency with statutory obligations to provide funding appropriated by Congress.

The [lawsuit](#)—filed on behalf of ALA and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the country's largest union representing museum and library workers, 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](#). The defendants named in the case are: President Trump; IMLS acting director Keith Sonderling; IMLS; acting administrator of U.S. DOGE Service and U.S. DOGE Service Temporary Organization Amy Gleason; U.S. DOGE Service; U.S. DOGE Service Temporary Organization; director of U.S. Office of Management and Budget Russell Vought; and the Office of Management and Budget.

“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,” ALA president Cindy Hohl said in a statement. “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.”

Democracy Forward, a nonprofit organization that provides legal representation and counsel to people and communities to “fight back against threats to democracy, social progress, and the rule of law,” was an [early ally in the fight against censorship, providing representation in the legal battles](#) for libraries, librarians, and intellectual freedom.

Read the full press release on ALA's legal action below.

**Subscribe now to unlock unlimited access to our award-winning coverage.**

**SUBSCRIBE**

## American Library Association, AFSCME Challenge Trump Administration Gutting of Institute of Museum and Library Services

### *Cuts to Independent Agency Threaten Libraries Nationwide*

**Washington, D.C.** - 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.

**Subscribe now to unlock unlimited access to our award-winning coverage.**

“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 is asking a court to permanently stop the law from being enforced; [Florida](#), where 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.

Read the full complaint [here](#).

# # #

*The American Library Association (ALA) is the only non-partisan, nonprofit organization dedicated entirely to America's libraries and library professionals.*

*For almost 150 years, ALA has provided resources to inspire library and information professionals to transform their communities through essential programs and services. The ALA serves academic, public, school, government, and special libraries, advocating for the profession and the library's role in enhancing learning and ensuring access to information for all.*

*For more information, visit [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org).*

*Democracy Forward is a national legal organization that advances democracy and social progress through litigation, policy, public education, and regulatory*

**Subscribe now to unlock unlimited access to our award-winning coverage.**

*engagement. For more information, please visit [www.democracyforward.org](http://www.democracyforward.org).*

*AFSCME's 1.4 million members provide the vital services that make America happen. With members in communities across the nation, serving in hundreds of different occupations — from nurses to corrections officers, child care providers to sanitation workers — AFSCME advocates for fairness in the workplace, excellence in public services and freedom and opportunity for all working families.*

---

American Library Association	Trump administration	IMLS	DOGE
Democracy Forward	American Federation of State		
County and Municipal Employees	lawsuit		

---

**RELATED →**

**INDUSTRY NEWS**

## Disaster Recovery Efforts Continue in the South, Los Angeles

by [Kara Yorio](#)

**INDUSTRY NEWS**

## The Cost of Losing IMLS Funding

by [Kara Yorio](#)

**BUDGETS & FUNDING**

**Subscribe now to unlock unlimited access to our award-winning coverage.**

## How Will the IMLS Cuts Impact Your Library?

by [SLJ Staff](#)

---

INDUSTRY NEWS

## Inaugural We Need Diverse Books Day Set For April 3 | News Bites

by [SLJ Staff](#)

---

INDUSTRY NEWS

## Students Speak Out Against Dismantling of Department of Education

by [Kara Yorio](#)

More →

---

### TOP STORIES

INDUSTRY NEWS

## The Cost of Losing IMLS Funding

by [Kara Yorio](#)

---

BUDGETS & FUNDING

## How Will the IMLS Cuts Impact Your Library?

by [SLJ Staff](#)

---

CENSORSHIP

## 'All Boys Aren't Blue' Tops List of Most Challenged Books of 2024

by [Kara Yorio](#)

---

OPINION

## 10 Things I Hate About Starred Reviews | Opinion

by [Kimberly Olson Fakh](#)

**Subscribe now to unlock unlimited access to our award-winning coverage.**

---

**GET THE BEST OF SLJ DELIVERED TO YOUR INBOX**  
 Check Out Our Free Newsletters!

**LEARN MORE**

RECOMMENDED

INDUSTRY NEWS



## The Cost of Losing IMLS Funding

[Kara Yorio](#)

From the loss of Hoopla, databases, and Wi-Fi hotspots to the closing of rural branches, librarians document the devastating effect of the end of IMLS funding.

INDUSTRY NEWS



## Disaster Recovery Efforts Continue in the South, Los Angeles

[Kara Yorio](#)

Schools and public libraries are still navigating the aftermath of devastating flooding and wildfires.



INDUSTRY NEWS

## Inaugural We Need Diverse Books Day Set For April 3 | News Bites

[SLJ Staff](#)

We Need Diverse Books will celebrate the first We Need Diverse Books Day on April 3; senators call on acting director of IMLS to continue funding programs as directed by Congress; Suzanne Collins talks philosophy and Sunrise on the Reaping; Eric Carle Honors honorees announced; and more.

Subscribe now to unlock unlimited access to our award-winning coverage.



## The Cost of Losing IMLS Funding

[Kara Yorio](#)

From the loss of Hoopla, databases, and Wi-Fi hotspots to the closing of rural branches, librarians document the devastating effect of the end of IMLS funding.

**Subscribe now to unlock unlimited access to our award-winning coverage.**