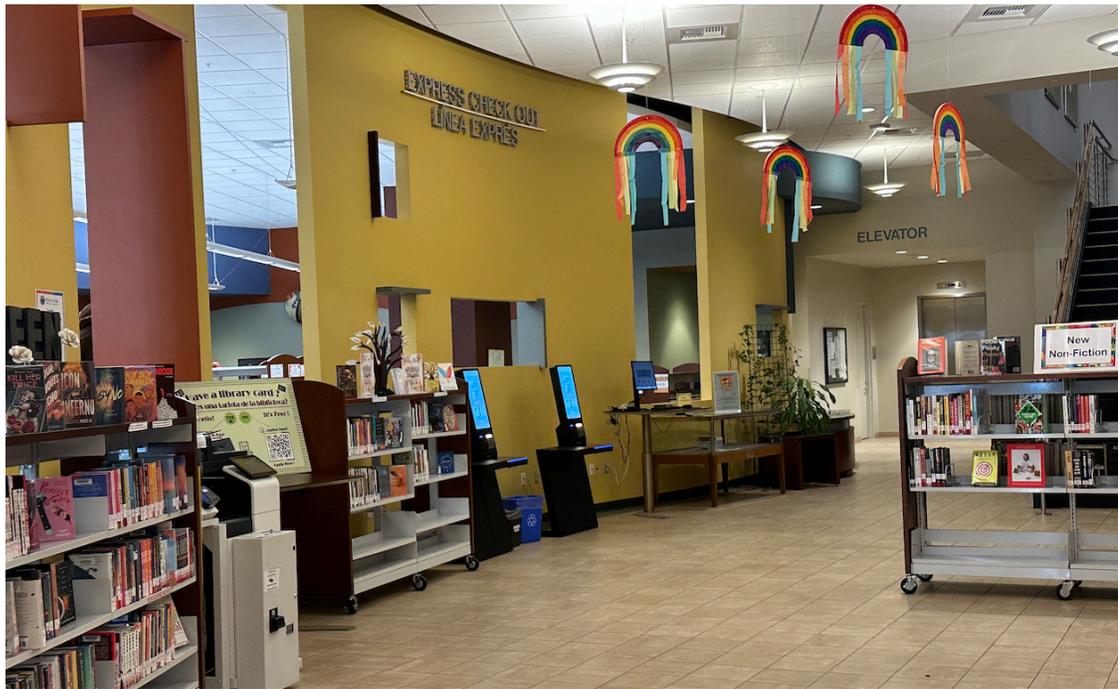


The PAJARONIAN

Lawsuit targets executive order cutting library, museum funding

Several services at risk, librarians say

BY TODD GUILD - April 7, 2025



The Main Branch of the Watsonville Public Library on Main Street. (Tarmo Hannula/The Pajaronian)

A March 14 [executive order](#) by President Donald Trump targeting federal funding for libraries and museums – among other things – will leave no community untouched. But the impact will vary throughout the state.

Both the Santa Cruz County Public Library and the Watsonville Public Library systems receive millions of dollars from Measure R, a 2008 quarter-cent sales tax earmarked exclusively for libraries. That will largely cushion local institutions from the order.

“We’re ok,” said Watsonville Public Library Director Alicia Martinez. “We’re not going to suffer.”

Still, the executive order lists seven agencies deemed to be “unnecessary” and demands that they “be eliminated to the maximum extent consistent with applicable law.”

This includes the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which is the only federal funding source solely for libraries. In 2024, the IMLS awarded \$266.7 million to museums, libraries and related organizations throughout the U.S.

The order also includes the Minority Business Development Agency and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

While Trump does not have the authority to eliminate federal departments outright, he can defund them so that they become largely ineffective.

The order means that the California State Library – the agency that delivers state and federal funding to local libraries – will lose its funding under the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). This year, LSTA funding amounts to more than \$15 million.

“We are deeply disappointed by this ill-informed decision, which immediately affects critical programs supported by these funds,” said Rebecca Wendt, California deputy state librarian. “The California State Library remains committed to serving all of the people of California and will explore alternative means to ensure continued access to essential library services.”

On April 7, California Attorney General Rob Bonta joined a coalition of 21 attorneys general [in a lawsuit](#) against the Trump Administration, challenging the order.

“The Trump Administration is once again violating the U.S. Constitution and the rule of law by attempting to unilaterally shut down agencies the President doesn’t like, including agencies that give the public access to facts, knowledge, and cultural heritage for free or at low cost,” Bonta stated in a press release.

For local libraries, the order will affect the system’s ability to deliver several services, including online access to the New York Times, which allows cardholders to read an average of 560 articles per month, and professional development courses and leadership programs for library staff, said Santa Cruz Public Libraries director Christopher Platt.

It will also impact free access to the Braille and Talking Book Library, which currently has nearly 200 active users.

“That’s really expensive to offer, and a local library like us or like Watsonville wouldn’t be able to step up and fill that void,” Platt said.

It will also hurt the ebook collection, which makes up for 46% of the library’s usage, meaning fewer choices and longer wait times for people who download and listen to books through the Libby app, he said.

The loss of funding will fall heaviest on museums, tribal libraries and small rural libraries, Platt said.

“Rural libraries, small libraries and tribal libraries especially,” he said. “They really rely on IMLS funding to do just about anything. These are on shoestring budgets. If that money goes away, the few innovative programs they offer might go away. So it has a ripple effect across the whole state.”

Libraries, he said, provide a vital role in their communities, with families accessing books to teach their children how to read and patrons finding a quiet work area or a place to connect with others.

“You just have to walk through any library in the state, any public library, and you see how necessary they are,” he said.

“I’ve seen public libraries do amazing things in my lifetime. Our collections are far more diverse than they’ve ever been. This kind of feels like we’re being attacked for no good reason. There is no rhyme or reason.”

TODD GUILD

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