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American Library Association challenges Trump cuts in court, as libraries face new tests

National Library Week does not generate significant political attention, but thanks to Trump and DOGE, this year is not like most.



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By **Steve Benen**

Ordinarily, the annual National Library Week does not generate significant attention from political writers, but this year is not like most. Indeed, National Library Week 2025 included an

important new lawsuit from the American Library Association. [The New York Times reported:](#)

“

The American Library Association and a union representing more than 42,000 cultural workers nationwide have filed a lawsuit contesting the Trump administration’s deep cuts to the federal agency that supports the nation’s libraries. ... The lawsuit, filed on Tuesday by the library association and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, came days after the Institute for Museum and Library Services dismissed most of its staff of 70, fired its board and began informing state library agencies that their grants had been cut.

As my MSNBC colleague [Ja’han Jones explained](#) last week, the Trump administration, by way of Elon Musk’s DOGE initiative, [gutted the Institute of Museum and Library Services](#), which funds museums, archives and libraries around the country.

This week’s lawsuit is seeking an injunction to reverse Team Trump’s cuts and halting “any further steps to dissolve the agency,” arguing that it’s up to Congress, not DOGE, to dismantle an agency created by lawmakers nearly 30 years ago with bipartisan support.

As [The New Republic recently noted](#), local libraries are mostly funded by local tax dollars, but these libraries do receive federal funds for things like employee training and technology updates. [A USA Today report](#) added that local libraries have relied on grants from the IMLS to fund everything from summer reading programs to programs that provide books to those with disabilities.

The more the Trump administration succeeds in hollowing out the IMLS, the more local institutions and the people who rely on them will suffer.

“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,” American Library Association 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,” she added.

It comes against a backdrop of extraordinary and unusual challenges that face libraries at multiple levels. In response to an order from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, for example, the U.S. Naval Academy’s Nimitz Library [removed 381 books](#), including Maya Angelou’s “I Know Why

the Caged Bird Sings” and books on the Holocaust. Similarly, on-base school libraries have also been directed [to remove books from shelves](#) that don’t meet with Team Trump’s approval.

Around the same time, [NBC News reported](#) that officials in California, Connecticut and Washington have been notified that the Trump administration has terminated funding the states rely on to operate many local libraries.

This week, meanwhile, the Mississippi Library Commission [scrubbed academic research](#) from a database used by state libraries, targeting research collections focused on “race relations” and “gender studies.”

Voters might not have realized last fall that the election would launch this kind of systematic offensive against libraries, but that’s precisely what the public is now receiving. 



Steve Benen

Steve Benen is a producer for "The Rachel Maddow Show," the editor of MaddowBlog and an MSNBC political contributor. He's also the bestselling author of "Ministry of Truth: Democracy, Reality, and the Republicans' War on the Recent Past."

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