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# HILADELPHIA GAY NEW

## Culture War Dispatches: Libraries, schools and the arts combat federal rollbacks

By **Gary L. Day** - April 14, 2025 3:58 pm



(Photo: Adobe Stock)

### Philadelphia area schools defy Trump

One of the Trump administration's major initiatives has been to roll back diversity, equity and inclusion programs in public schools, threatening to withhold funding from schools that promote "discriminatory equity ideology." In response, the Phoenixville Area School District has been closely examining its curriculum and after-school activities. However, the school has no plans to make any changes to comply with President Donald Trump's executive orders.

"The way we're fighting back is what we're not doing," said Scott Overland, Phoenixville's school board president. "Trump is trying to bully us into compliance. We need to show him he's wrong."

Reports have surfaced that a number of Philadelphia area schools are quietly following Phoenixville's example. That's partly because most public schools rely less on federal money, and instead are largely supported by local and state taxes. Some schools are also striving to navigate the conflicts between Trump's executive orders and Pennsylvania's state antidiscrimination laws.

### Library advocates sue DOGE

The American Library Association (ALA) and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees has filed a [lawsuit](#) against the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), among other

defendants, for “the Trump administration’s gutting of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).”

The lawsuit argues that DOGE’s actions against IMLS — including firing employees, ending the grant programs, and stopping all of the institute’s work — were illegal and unconstitutional. It claims these actions violate Article I and Article II of the Constitution. The organizations also say these actions will cause “immediate and disastrous consequences for Plaintiffs ALA and AFSCME as well as their members, including librarians, libraries, and the public.”

“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.”

### **Nearly 400 books have been removed from the US Naval Academy — but not ‘Mein Kampf’**

Almost 400 books have been removed from the United States Naval Academy courtesy of the Pentagon implementing Trump’s policies on what his administration views as “DEI.” Among the removed books are classic titles, such as Maya Angelou’s “[I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings](#)” and George Orwell’s “1984.”

Already, Democratic lawmakers — Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.) and Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-Pa.), specifically — are fighting for America’s military institutions to maintain their academic rigor, freedom and First Amendment rights. In a letter, they demanded to know the process for the hundreds of books being removed, as well as the rationale behind the removal.

“...this is a blatant attack on the First Amendment and a clear effort to suppress academic freedom and rigor at the United States Naval Academy,” the representatives wrote. “Moreover, it displays an alarming return to McCarthy-era censorship.”

However, one of the books *not* removed from the Academy’s shelves is Adolf Hitler’s “Mein Kampf.”

### **Philadelphia Cultural Alliance calls for protests of DOGE’s cuts to humanities orgs**

In a recent advocacy report, the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance is urging its supporters to participate in a letter-writing campaign protesting DOGE’s intention to take an axe to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). DOGE is calling for an 80% reduction of NEH staff, and cancelling all grants awarded under the Biden administration that have not been fully disbursed.

The Alliance is making this call in support of PA Humanities, a close organizational partner with the Alliance. PA Humanities received a significant percentage of its funding from the NEH. Earlier this month, PA Humanities received an abrupt notice from DOGE, signed by Michael McDonald, Acting Chair of the NEH, that its general operating grant has been terminated, effective immediately.

In the past, the NEH has provided grants to libraries and humanities organizations across Pennsylvania, bringing in more than \$37 million to the state over the past five years. The Alliance has worked with PA Humanities for many years on significant research, such as the [Arts, Culture and Economic Prosperity: Greater Philadelphia](#) study, which confirmed the creative sector’s essential contribution to the region’s vitality and the life of the city’s residents.



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