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Kennedy to Trump Admin: Don't Shelve Our Library Funding

Standing With Library Officials and Patrons, Kennedy Demands Restoration of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Which Provides Funding For Libraries and Museums Across New York

In 2024, IMLS Awarded \$266 Million in Grants Nationwide - Trump Admin's Executive Order Undermines Critical Library Infrastructure

BUFFALO, N.Y. - Congressman Tim Kennedy (NY-26) joined leadership of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries, along with library patrons and colleagues in government, to demand the rescission of the [Trump Administration's executive order dismantling](#) the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), a Congressionally-authorized agency that provides federal support for libraries in Western New York and across the United States.

In 2024, the IMLS awarded \$266 million in grants and research funding for library and museum staffing, infrastructure, educational programs, and equity initiatives. In New York State, IMLS provided more than \$8 million last year alone, supporting literacy programs for children and adults, training for library professionals across New York State's 72 library systems and 7,000 libraries. In addition, it provided nearly \$500,000 to the University at Buffalo to study workplace challenges of first-generation professionals, helping new generations to create wealth and financial independence, and \$100,000 for the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor to support cultural preservation and community engagement.

"Libraries are more than a collection of books, they're a place to find community, to learn, to open one's mind to the world," said **Congressman Kennedy**. "Every penny that is cut from IMLS is funding that needs to be made up for at the state or local level, forcing difficult choices for our neighborhood libraries. Do they hire a librarian or replace the HVAC? Support summer reading programs or install a new roof? These decisions prioritize billionaires saving a few dollars while putting essential services for our most vulnerable communities at risk. That is unacceptable. The Trump Administration needs to hear us clearly: don't shelve our library funding."

Buffalo & Erie County Public Library's Deputy Director of Public Services, Dorinda Darden said, "We are deeply troubled by the dismantling of the IMLS, the only federal agency dedicated to funding and supporting America's 125,000 libraries. Our libraries play a critical role in democracy and therefore we oppose any action that threatens library services. Since 1996, the Institute of Museum and Library Services and its Grants to States Program, have provided funds to support the New York State Library. The State was then responsible for distributing over \$100 million in state operating aid to support libraries of all types, as well as \$45 million in construction aid. The loss of that funding, a reduction in funding, or delays in receipt, would be devastating to our communities—and the excellence of public libraries. Every year, we rely on construction aid to help with building renovations, upgrades, and accessibility for our Erie County patrons."

"This executive order is another mean-spirited, unnecessary and vindictive cut from an administration that is out of touch with what Americans want but is nonetheless actively working to destroy the agencies and institutions that we rely on for education, enlightenment and more," said **Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz**. "We must stand together and speak together against the forces that are endeavoring to make us weaker, sicker and less safe. Make your voice heard and stand up for what is important to you, your family, and your community today, because they will try to take it away from you tomorrow."

"This is unsound policy, plain and simple," said **Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples Stokes**. "The Institute of Museums and Library Services provides support for places like the Frank E. Merriweather Jr, Library. I stand with Congressman Kennedy, other elected officials and the leadership at Buffalo and Erie County Public Libraries in calling for the restoration of the IMLS."

"This Trump administration is bent on indiscriminately dismantling the federal government in the name of 'efficiency' with no regard to the consequences of their actions," said **Senator Sean Ryan**. "Our libraries are vital community spaces that provide resources to New Yorkers from every walk of life, and they are lifelines for many of our most vulnerable citizens. We will continue to support New York's libraries at the state level, but dismantling this source of federal funding will create challenges for our public institutions, many of which already operate on a razor's edge each year. I thank Congressman Kennedy for his efforts to fight back against this disastrous plan."

"Libraries have been a gateway for people of all ages to access literature, computers, music, workshops in a safe place to convene," said **Senator April N.M. Baskin**. "Trump failed before in trying to dismantle the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and we must once again shine a light on his executive order calling for the elimination of this essential agency, which provided more than \$8 million in grants to New York State. These reckless actions by the administration undermine the critical resources that are vital to all communities."

"Libraries are vital community centers offering a range of services and a trove of information," said **Assemblymember Karen McMahon**. "Western New York is fortunate to be supported by an expansive and robust library system thanks to Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries, but the nearly 40 branches and mobile library units in its system, and particularly branches in small and rural areas, rely heavily on support from federal government grants to provide important programming and materials, benefitting hundreds of visitors a day. As a member of the Assembly Committee on Libraries and Technology, I am very concerned and frustrated by the shortsighted and reckless actions of the Trump administration to dismantle the Institute of Museum and Library Services and slash over \$260 million in library grants nationwide, and more than \$8 million here in New York State. I thank Congressman Kennedy for leading the charge to shine a light on how disastrous these cuts will be to local libraries, and I join my colleagues at all levels of government in condemning such cuts."

Assemblymember Jon D. Rivera said, “The Trump administration’s attempts to dismantle the Institute of Museum and Library Services is just one more layer of pain it wants to inflict on our communities and our children’s education in the name of short-term profit. The Institute delivers roughly \$160 million annually to state library agencies, which covers anywhere from a third to half of their budgets. Without this vital funding source, libraries will be forced to cut services and reduce resources. These are spaces that are the backbone of communities across the country. Waging war on their ability to educate and enlighten, is unconscionable.”

"As an Assemblyman, I oppose the decision to dismantle the Institute of Museum and Library Services," said **Assemblyman Patrick Burke**. "Ending this support will take away funding that helps libraries and museums serve people in New York and across the country."

"Museums and libraries, both here and across the state, are centers for community and beacons for education," said **Assemblymember Bill Conrad**. "We must not forget, too, that they employ people, draw visitors, and support economies - and cultural tourism is a treasured signature of life in Western New York. Without the partnership of IMLS, museums and libraries cannot function in these vital capacities and in fact may not survive. It's hard to conceive of anyone in a public leadership role who is beholden to the best interests of the people feeling justified in dismantling an agency like IMLS. I appreciate Congressman Kennedy for his relentless efforts to counter the destructive, selfish agenda of the Trump Administration."

"Our libraries are more than just buildings with books - they are vital community centers that provide access to education, technology, and opportunity for all, especially our most vulnerable residents," said **Common Council Majority Leader & Ellicott District Member Leah Halton-Pope**. "The Trump Administration’s decision to dismantle the Institute of Museum and Library Services is a direct threat to equity and progress in cities like Buffalo. We must stand together to protect the resources that empower our communities, close the opportunity gap, and build a stronger, more informed future."

"I am outraged that, once again, we find ourselves speaking out against the reckless and short-sighted cuts proposed by the 47th President," said **Masten District Council Member Zeneta Everhart**. "This time, our libraries and cultural institutions are under attack. Libraries are more than just buildings filled with books—they are pillars of education, safe havens for children, and vital community spaces. As a child, my local library was my refuge. It was where I escaped a turbulent reality, discovered my love for reading, and forged friendships that still endure. My librarian didn’t just lend books—she nurtured my spirit with kindness and encouragement. What’s happening to our country is deeply alarming. Though this President’s term is temporary, the damage to our institutional foundations could take generations to repair. Our cultural institutions are the keepers of our collective memory and the truth of our nation’s history. We must stand united against any elected leader who seeks to dismantle or erase them."

"In Buffalo, our libraries are lifelines," said **Fillmore District Council Member Mitch Nowakowski**. "They are third spaces—beloved cornerstones of our communities, offering lifelong learning, access to technology, employment resources, and so many other essential services. Dismantling the Institute of Museum and Library Services threatens to upend the support and community networks families in Buffalo rely on every day. I am proud to stand with Congressman Kennedy and our public libraries in opposing this disastrous move from the federal government."

The IMLS was created by Congress in 1996 and was most recently reauthorized in 2018. The agency is responsible for awarding financial assistance, collecting data, forming strategic partnerships, and advising policymakers on museum, library, and information services.

The text of Kennedy’s letter is below:

April 21 2025

Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C., 20503

Dear Director Vought,

I write in opposition to the executive order issued by the Trump Administration on March 14, 2025, to dismantle the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). As you know, the IMLS is an independent grantmaking agency and the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and overseas territories. I urge the Administration to rescind this damaging and shortsighted executive order, which undermines the critical public infrastructure libraries provide and threatens services millions of Americans rely on.

The IMLS was created with the passage of the Museum and Library Services Act of 1996 and was reauthorized on December 31, 2018. The Agency has statutory authority to award financial assistance, collect data, form strategic partnerships, and advise policymakers and other federal agencies on museum, library, and information services. Since 1996, the IMLS has shown that community investments in libraries and museums not only help create spaces and experiences for all but also increase opportunities for those seeking to expand and improve in education, workforce development, economic development, and civic responsibility. While IMLS funding represents approximately 0.003% of the federal budget, these investments have been linked to positive individual and community outcomes, especially following COVID-19, when the IMLS placed a renewed importance on responsive grant making to support the specific needs of local communities across its 13 grant programs. Eliminating the agency would have far-reaching and devastating effects, especially in underserved communities like those I represent in Western New York.

In 2024, IMLS awarded \$266 million in grants and research funding to support library and museum staffing, infrastructure, educational programs, and equity initiatives. This funding allowed institutions to provide necessary community services like workforce development, youth literacy programs, STEM education programs, and so much more. In New York, IMLS awarded over \$8 million last year alone, supporting literacy programs for children and adults, training for library professionals across 7,000 institutions, and initiatives to expand access to technology. In Western New York specifically, these grants include:

- University at Buffalo – \$493,910 for the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program to develop the next generation of library professionals
- Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor Commission (Buffalo) – \$100,000 to support cultural preservation and community engagement

- Seneca Nation of Indians (Salamanca) – Over \$46,000 in grants to strengthen Indigenous library services
- Livingston County Historical Museum (Geneseo) – \$149,918 through the Save America's Treasures program for historical preservation
- Roger Tory Peterson Institute (Jamestown) – \$20,374 through Inspire! Grants for Small Museums to expand access and educational programming

With the dismantling of IMLS, many local library branches will not feel the loss immediately, but the long-term consequences will be catastrophic. States like New York may be forced to divert construction aid to supplement the gaps in federal funding, putting library systems that are already stretched thin, such as the Buffalo and Erie County Public Libraries, at risk.

Additionally, despite Congress's bipartisan commitment to fund IMLS through September 2025, as of March 31, the entire IMLS staff has reportedly been placed on administrative leave. This not only violates the intent of Congress but signals an effort to bypass legislative authority in eliminating an agency created and reauthorized by law, most recently with bipartisan support in 2018.

As a former state legislator and current Member of Congress, I have witnessed firsthand the value of libraries and museums as anchors of learning and opportunity in our communities. Eliminating the Institute of Museum and Library Services will have serious consequences in every community throughout the country. I urge the administration to immediately reverse course and restore full support for IMLS. The future of our libraries, museums, and the millions of Americans they serve depends on it. Thank you for your attention to this request. Should you have any questions, I welcome your call.

Sincerely,

Timothy M. Kennedy
Member of Congress (NY-26)

Cc: Keith E. Sonderling, Deputy Secretary of Labor, Acting Director, Institute of Museum and Library Services