

LIBRARIES

March 26, 2025
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EXECUTIVE ORDER MARCH 14, 2025: “CONTINUING THE REDUCTION OF THE FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY”

Calls for the elimination of the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), among other agencies.

Asks the agency leaders to report which functions of the agency are required by statute by March 21st, 2025.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/continuing-the-reduction-of-the-federal-bureaucracy/>

WHAT IMLS FUNCTIONS ARE REQUIRED BY STATUTE?

The EveryLibrary Institute has [created a list of IMLS functions that they believe are required by statute here](#) (shall vs. may language)

Required activities (in their interpretation) would include:

- grants to states for library services
- state plan requirements for library grants
- Native American library services
- National Leadership Grants program
- IMLS administration
- Policy research, data collection and dissemination
- Grants and contracts

WHAT IMLS FUNCTIONS AREN'T REQUIRED BY STATUTE, THEN?

The EveryLibrary institute believes that these functions may be deemed discretionary (“may” instead of “shall” language):

- Awards and Medals
- Museum Services Activities
- Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program
 - Funding for recruiting and training new librarians, supporting diversity in the library workforce, and graduate level education for librarians.
- 21st Century Museum Professional program
 - Workforce development, training, mentorship of museum professionals and research and evaluation of museum education initiatives
- Other programs including Technical Assistance for Museums and Libraries, Public-Private Partnerships, and Support for Digital Literacy and Emerging Technologies

UPDATE: THE IMLS BOARD LETTER

The IMLS board wrote a letter to their new acting director

- “The board’s letter states that the agency’s “core statutory obligations that are not discretionary” include: Grants to States for Library Services, Native American Library Services, the National Leadership Grants Program, State Plan Requirements, and the statutory Disbursement of Funds.”
- “It is our considered advice that all current-year and multi-year grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, and awards that have been authorized by law and funded by Congressional appropriation, most recently by the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025, constitute statutory obligations,” the letter reads. “These include all **Museum Services Activities, Technical Assistance for Museums and Libraries activities, Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program grants, and support for Digital Literacy and Emerging Technologies grants and other grant programs.**”

WHAT DOES IMLS GRANT FUNDING GO TO?

You can search the IMLS database of grant recipients here:

<https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded-grants> to see what grants have been funded

According to this database, South Carolina received 12 IMLS grants in 2024, including grants that went to:

- Children's Museum of the Lowcountry
- USC School of Library and Information Science
- South Carolina State Museum
- Clemson University Library
- Riverbanks Zoo and Garden
- Catawba Indian Nation
- Sigal Music Museum

DOES IT AFFECT ACADEMIC LIBRARIES? YES.

Inside Higher Ed reported on just some of the IMLS grant funded projects happening at academic libraries all over the country, which include things like:

- Keeping a tribal college library's services available during a building renovation in Michigan
- Digitizing an important archival collection at an HBCU library in Virginia
- Conducting a study to help school librarians better support autistic students in Florida
- Funding for Library Science graduate students nationally

WHAT IMPACT WILL THIS EO HAVE?

It is not yet clear what will be deemed required under statute and what will not, or what will happen next.

The IMLS employees about 75 people who would potentially be dismissed ([ALA press release](#)).

“Libraries of all types translate 0.003% of the federal budget into programs and services used in more than 1.2 billion in-person patron visits every year, and many more virtual visits.” ([ALA press release](#)).

“Rural libraries receive more aid from the federal government to stay afloat than their peer libraries in suburban and urban areas.” ([Book Riot reporting](#)).

WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE THE EO:

Trump appointed a new acting director of the IMLS, Keith Sonderling, who has stated that IMLS will now focus on “patriotism...core values...American exceptionalism...love of country...”. (He is a lawyer, not a librarian, and is also nominated to be the Deputy Secretary of Labor).

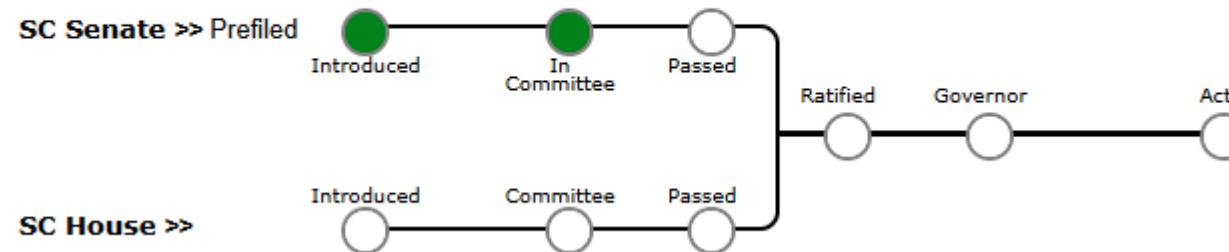
The EveryLibrary Institute made a statement in response to this appointment that “IMLS...must remain nonpartisan and nonpolitical and aligned with the statutory framework established by Congress.”

S. 104 (SOUTH CAROLINA SENATE, 12/11/24)

https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess126_2025-2026/bills/104.htm

Most recent activity: referred to committee on education on January 14, 2025

The following graphic is a general description of the legislation's status. Users must reference the bill history and the respective journals of the House and Senate for detailed status information.



S. 104: WHAT'S IN THE BILL?

To receive state funding, every county library (so, public libraries) would have to certify (and re-certify four times a year) that they

“do not offer any books or materials that appeal to the prurient interest of children under the age of seventeen in children, youth, or teen sections of libraries and are only made available with explicit parental consent”

SOME POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:

“Prurient interests” is a vague term. A dictionary defines it as “having or encouraging an excessive interest in sexual matters”.

This bill does not define what it means by using this term, however. Which books are prurient, and which are not? Who gets to decide?

The bill does not say how the State library will certify that libraries have complied.

Will libraries afraid of losing funding just get rid of any books that they think any person might ever complain about?

OF RELATED INTEREST:

In 2024, the York County (South Carolina) Library Board of Trustees voted to stop buying new books for children and teens until the state better clarifies what is and what is not permitted in public libraries (the “no prurient materials” phrase was a state budget proviso before appearing in S. 104)

So even before this rule was being proposed as a state law, it was already having a chilling effect on what libraries were willing to buy for their collections.

SC H. 4059 “FREEDOM TO READ PROTECTIONS AND RESPECT FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIAN AUTHORITY”

South Carolina House (February 19, 2025)

https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess126_2025-2026/bills/4059.htm

Has been introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Education and Public Works.

WHAT'S IN H. 4059?

Requires each school district to set up a formal Material Review Committee to review book challenges and require that this committee must include at least one certified school library media specialist (among other requirements).

States that school library media specialists must be protected from intimidation, harassment, or undue interference.

States that school library media specialists must not face threats, retaliation, or disciplinary action for doing their jobs, and specifically must not be required to remove materials in advance of a formal challenge process being completed.

Affirms that the freedom to read is constitutionally protected and affirms that public school students have the right to access a wide range of diverse, developmentally appropriate materials that reflect varying perspectives, cultural experiences, and subject matters.

OTHER THINGS OF NOTE?

ALA Town Hall from 11am to 12pm CT on Thursday, March 27 for an update on IMLS, resources for librarians, and what actions you can take. [Register online.](#)

CCU AAUP National Day of Action Event, Thursday April 17th @ 4:30 pm, tentatively scheduled for Penny Hall room 203. Learn about threats to Higher Education and help plan actions to respond.