



WASHINGTON
Secretary of State
Washington State Library



April 4, 2025

Dear Members of the Washington State Congressional Delegation,

As leaders of your Washington State Library and directors of community libraries across Washington state, we are grateful for your ongoing support of libraries. We know you recognize the important role libraries play in communities across our state. We are writing today to express deep concerns about the impact of cuts to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The Washington State Library is the recipient of \$3.9 million in the IMLS Grants to States program and two multi-year leadership grants. Washington libraries, universities, tribes, and museums received more than \$23.7 million in the last three years through IMLS grants.

Libraries ensure people have unfettered access to information at hundreds of public, school, academic, and institutional library locations across Washington. This commitment is rooted in the fundamental principle that an educated and informed citizenry is critical to a free society. That goal for libraries is not a partisan issue. They represent a critical 'third place' in communities across the state; a social environment that is not home or work and is for everyone.

Wednesday night, April 2, the Washington State Library received a cancellation notice of the \$3.9 million IMLS grant.

Federal funding plays a crucial role in supporting libraries across Washington. IMLS funding managed by the Washington State Library directly benefits public, tribal, K-12, and community college libraries. Losing these funds would have devastating consequences, especially for smaller and rural libraries.

Here's what is at stake:

- The Washington Digital Library Consortium serves 40 library systems, lending more than one million eBooks and audiobooks to Washingtonians annually. Without funding, this consortium is now seriously threatened.
- Federal support funds half of research database subscriptions for libraries. Given state budget limitations, this resource would likely end.
- Funding and expertise for rural libraries that supply broadband equipment and internet access to underserved areas.
- Expertise that helps tribal libraries secure funding, update technology, and improve services.



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- Professional training and consulting for public libraries across the state, especially as they face censorship and budget challenges.
- 30% of federal funds for the Washington State Library support Washington Talking Book and Braille Library's statewide service, and Institutional Library Services, where state prisoners are allowed library access to better themselves and prepare to rejoin society after confinement.
- 32 Washington State Library employees are funded through IMSL Grants to States program.

This is an urgent matter. State budgets are being finalized, and we anticipate reduced funding for the Washington State Library. Additional cuts as noticed in the grant cancellation from the federal government would be devastating.

We appreciate your attention to this critical issue and welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can work together to protect our libraries.

Sincerely,

Steve Hobbs
Washington Secretary of State

Sara Jones
Washington State Librarian

Ainsley Nobara
Executive Director
Washington Library Association



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