From the Director’s Desk …

The Status of Federal Funding for Libraries

On March 14, 2025, the Trump administration issued an executive order to eliminate the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Established by the Museum and Library Services Act in 1996, IMLS is the only federal agency that funds libraries and museums across the country. In 2024, IMLS provided $266.7 million to libraries and museums through services, grants, and research, totaling a mere 0.003 percent of the total federal budget. Considering the 125,000 libraries - public, school, academic, and special - across our nation and the 1.2 billion patron visits - both in person and virtual - to these libraries, elimination of this funding would essentially affect us all.

The American Library Association issued a statement concerning President Trump’s action the following day on March 15, 2025. “Americans have loved and relied on public, school, and academic libraries for generations. By eliminating the only federal agency dedicated to funding library services, the Trump administration’s executive order is cutting off at the knees the most beloved and trusted of America institutions and the staff and services they offer.”

How much this legislation would affect public libraries depends on the funding of each individual library, so I can only speak for the funding of our library. At Albertson Memorial Library, we don’t receive federal funding directly. Roughly 84% of our funding comes directly from our local municipalities (the village and township of Albany), and the rest comes from the counties of Green and Rock. However, we do receive services provided to us from the South Central Library System (SCLS), one of seventeen library systems throughout the state. Each of these library systems are funded through local and state governments, but they receive federal funding in the way of grants distributed through the Wisconsin Department of Instruction. SCLS has the capacity to provide a lot of services to small, rural libraries such as ours. We receive technology support and upgrades, provisions for our summer library program and children’s services, and training for staff. Last year, AML received two federal grants from SCLS. Without those grants, we wouldn’t have been able to provide free books to children in our area at Trunk or Treat or Snack with Santa events, nor would I have received the training necessary to serve effectively as the director of our library.

What can you do to support your local library? The biggest impact may come from contacting your representatives in Congress. Tell them to protect your library. Let them know how your local library has supported you and how that library will be impacted by cuts in funding. You can also attend a library, school, or municipality board meeting to express your support. Now is the time for us to stand up in support of one of our more valued assets - our public libraries.

Melissa Everson, Director

Albertson Memorial Library

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