



**Board Members**

April 3, 2025

Brian Allen

Keith E. Sonderling  
Acting Director  
Institute of Museum and Library Services  
955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW  
Suite 4000  
Washington, DC 20024

Joan Breier Brodsky

Susan Lynn Gibbons

Amy Elizabeth Gilman

William T. Harris

Dear Acting Director Sonderling,

Lisa R. Hathaway

On behalf of members of the National Museum and Library Services Board, we write to respectfully request clarification about the recent decision to place the staff of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) on administrative leave, effective March 31, 2025, and other matters.

Julius C. Jefferson Jr.

Ashley Jordan

As you are aware, the Board holds a statutory advisory role in support of the agency and its Director. We hope to fulfill that role constructively and collaboratively. In that spirit, we were disappointed to learn of this significant operational change not through internal communications but through news reports. We are concerned that neither the Advisory Board, the agency's grantees, nor the staff appear to have received any forewarning or opportunity for consultation prior to the implementation of an administrative leave order.

Cameron Kitchin

MaryLynn Mack

Kelli Mosteller

Dipesh Navsaria

We have not yet received a response to our letter dated March 24, 2025, in which we requested information about the agency's planned response to the President's Executive Order 14238 of March 14, 2025. The absence of communication from the agency's leadership to its statutory advisory body has created an information vacuum in which speculation and uncertainty replace transparency and confidence.

James G. Neal

Annie Norman

Halona Norton-Westbrook

We are reaching out again to solicit answers to several important and time-sensitive questions, all of which are grounded in our shared interest in ensuring the continuity, integrity, and impact of IMLS's programs and mission:

Allison C. Perkins

Mónica Ramírez-Montagut

Timothy D. Murray

• **Administrative Leave Implementation:**

We understand that staff have been placed on administrative leave for a 90-day period and that this leave was implemented suddenly and comprehensively. However, other reports suggest that a small number of staff may have been recalled. Can you clarify how grant payments, oversight, and essential functions will be managed in the absence of key personnel? If some staff have returned to duty, what are their roles and responsibilities?

Ramiro S. Salazar

• **Agency Interests and Systems:**

The letter issued to staff on March 31, 2025, stated that the administrative leave was necessary to "safeguard legitimate IMLS interests and systems." Can you please clarify what specific interests or systems are being protected?

• **DOGE Operational Role:**

In the absence of some or all of IMLS staff, what activities and functions, if any, are being undertaken by the Division of Government Efficiency (DOGE) with respect to agency operations? Has DOGE assumed responsibilities related to grants or statutory programs?

• **National Awards and Medals:**

This Board has a statutory role in awarding the National Medal for Museum and Library Service (§ 9101(3)). Will the agency continue to administer this award, and if so, what timelines and processes will be followed?

• **Participation in America250:**

We note that President Trump's [Executive Order 14189](#) (January 29, 2025) names the Director of IMLS as a member of the interagency "Task Force 250" and requires Task Force members to submit a report of agency planning and activities related to the 250th Anniversary of American Independence by March 1, 2025. Has IMLS fulfilled its responsibility to submit this report to the Task Force Executive Director? Is the agency currently engaged in ongoing planning related to the America250 celebrations?

As stated in our letter of March 24, the Board remains deeply committed to supporting IMLS in fulfilling its statutory duties and advancing its mission of service to libraries, museums, archives, and grant recipients nationwide. However, a prolonged administrative leave of most or all staff raises fundamental questions about the agency's ability to execute those responsibilities, manage its grants portfolio, and maintain core services.

We offer to meet with you at your earliest opportunity in open session to discuss these matters. We intend to participate in a dialogue that affirms our mutual commitment to transparency, accountability, and public trust. We thank you in advance for your attention to these issues and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

*Members of the National Museum and Library Services Board*

Members of the National Museum and Library Services Board

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