



The Seattle Public Library Foundation

March 25, 2025

Dear Library Friends,

Recent political events are troubling. Proposed cuts to federal programs that strengthen our libraries, cuts to related systems like education, and challenges to the media all appear to have one common thread: to limit access to knowledge and free speech. By extension, this depletes the values outlined in our nation's constitution.

Libraries promote access to stories and perspectives that allow people to draw their own conclusions. Policies on intellectual freedom are designed to promote free speech. Today, free speech and the right to learn are being challenged – yet again – and have potential to impede the public's ability to think critically.

While The Seattle Public Library is primarily funded at the local level with support from taxpayers, voters, and donors in Seattle, the executive order to dismantle the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) puts libraries nationwide at risk. Defunding this federal agency threatens innovative programs, digital collections, and countless opportunities for library patrons seeking greater access to information.

If you wish to take action, there are several things you can do.

1. **Join our PLAN.** The Public Library Action Network will alert you when you can use your voice to advocate for libraries. While many local policymakers share your love for our libraries, continued advocacy on why libraries matter is important. Plus, when you reach out, you can show gratitude for their service. (Imagine the flood of messages they are fielding!) [Sign up here.](#)
2. **Give to libraries.** April 1st is Library Giving Day. We encourage everyone to [make a gift to help our library](#). Regardless of what happens at the federal level, we can all enhance our public libraries. Plus, programs like Books Unbanned that help young people nationwide access books are only possible because of donors like you. Feedback from the participating youth shows how grateful they are for access to **all books**, not just banned material.
3. **Educate yourself using library resources.** Understand how public systems can be dismantled and read history to understand the motivations that are leading to today's actions. By being informed about the views of all sides, we can better understand and articulate the positions we value.

I remain optimistic that our community will be a beacon for democracy and free speech. Our library spaces can be places where everyone feels like they belong.

Board of Directors

Sarah Stanley
President

Matt Hillman
Jennifer Southwell
Co-Vice Presidents

Nick Momyer
Treasurer

Jon Jurich
Secretary

Justo González
Immediate Past President

Stephanie Axelrod
Morgan Collins
Karen Conover
Jeanette Flory-Sagan
Sibyl Frankenburg
Sharon Hammel
Roy Hamrick
Margaret Inouye
Sarah Kohut
Florence Larson
Ellen Look
Tyler P. Mickey
Brittney Moraski
Raj Rakhra
David Strauss
Maria Valente
Sam Howe Verhovek
Julie Zunker

Chief Executive Officer
Brian Lawrence

Board Liaison
Carmen Bendixen

**Chief Librarian &
Executive Director**
Tom Fay

In closing, I've been thinking a lot about civic courage. Each year, we invite youth to apply for our Civic Courage Scholarship, and many young people write about individuals and organizations they admire. These young people inspire me with their quest to learn and grow.

I hope you continue to be inspired to learn and grow, and please continue to stand up and support our public libraries near and far.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brian Lawrence
Chief Executive Officer
The Seattle Public Library Foundation

P.S. [Here is a statement](#) from The Seattle Public Library and King County Library System on the IMLS executive order.