



**AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES, AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, AND MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION
FILE LAWSUIT ALLEGING ILLEGAL DISMANTLING OF
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES**

Lawsuit aims to reinstate NEH grant programs, divisions, and staff.

For Immediate Release / May 1, 2025 (New York, NY) — The [American Council of Learned Societies](#) (ACLS), the [American Historical Association](#) (AHA), and the [Modern Language Association](#) (MLA) filed a lawsuit in federal district court today, seeking to reverse the recent actions to devastate the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), including the elimination of grant programs, staff, and entire divisions and programs.

In recent weeks, the NEH has suspended entire divisions, initiated the mass firing of 65 percent of its staff, and suspended entire grant programs. These moves threaten the future of American research into history, literature, languages, philosophy, politics, society, and culture. They restrict Americans' ability to understand our national history and experiences.

The National Endowment for the Humanities was created in 1965 as a federal agency dedicated to funding the humanities, free of political interference. Over the past six decades, the NEH has awarded over \$6 billion in funding and has supported the humanities in every state and US jurisdiction. While the agency's current budget represents a mere one hundredths of one percent of the federal budget, the NEH has an outsize public impact. It plays a crucial role in connecting Americans to their cultural heritage, facilitating grassroots programs that have enriched K–12 education, promoted understanding of military experiences and supported returning veterans, bolstered local tourism economies, hosted community events, supported public education, produced pioneering research, and much more.

The NEH's recent actions and the administration's refusal to distribute funds appropriated by Congress violate the law in multiple ways: they fail to provide reasoning for the NEH's actions, disregard the constitutional separation of powers, and, by refusing to spend appropriations as legally required, ignore the Impoundment Control Act of 1974. The plaintiffs, represented by the Jacobson Lawyers Group, are associations represented on the National Humanities Alliance executive committee. The Phi Beta Kappa Society is also contributing to this effort.

Although Congress allocated funding to the NEH through its lawful appropriations process, more than 1,000 previously awarded grants have been terminated, and deep cuts to the NEH staff have compromised NEH's ability to make future grants. These grants provide crucial support to state humanities councils, museums, libraries, researchers, and teachers across the country. Without this funding, thousands of educational, cultural, and historical programs are in immediate danger of shutting down, directly harming local communities across the nation. Important historical preservation projects will cease, and enriching partnerships between college campuses and communities will be eliminated. The losses from these unlawful cuts will be devastating, restricting millions of Americans' access to humanities programming and to the complex, nuanced view of our nation's history and culture that come only from deep research. This lawsuit seeks to reverse the unlawful actions of the administration and ensure that the NEH can continue to support thousands of invaluable initiatives in the years to come.

“Since it was established, with strong bipartisan congressional support, the NEH has exemplified the value and need for the humanities in a vibrant democracy,” said ACLS President Joy Connolly. “Its thoughtful grantmaking and partnerships are vital to education, libraries, cultural institutions, and community initiatives that study local history and more. Deep cuts to the programs and staff of the NEH will deprive communities in every state of resources that enhance their quality of life and will hold back the progress of thousands of scholars. It will signal the federal government’s turn away from the civic values it has long espoused.”

James Grossman, executive director of the AHA, expressed concern for the future of American public culture if a government agency dedicated to historical preservation, literacy, and understanding were dismantled. “The NEH leverages its very small budget to support work in nearly every venue where Americans engage with the humanities. We cannot deny our nation’s divisions. We cannot heal divisions unless we understand their origins and evolution. It makes no sense to eviscerate the agency that helps all Americans to understand and transcend boundaries of human thought and interaction.”

“The humanities are not a luxury,” said MLA executive director Paula M. Krebs. “They are a necessity, teaching people vital skills, including how to effectively communicate, construct arguments, evaluate evidence, and build connections across cultures. Cutting the NEH’s funding and staff jeopardizes not only the work of the MLA and its members but also thousands of locally led programs across this country that provide Americans with access to essential education. In the face of these unprecedented and destructive cuts, humanities leaders must fight back together.”

About the American Council of Learned Societies

Formed a century ago, the [American Council of Learned Societies \(ACLS\)](#) is a nonprofit federation of 81 scholarly organizations. As the leading representative of American scholarship in the humanities and interpretive social sciences, ACLS upholds the core principle that knowledge is a public good. In supporting its member organizations, ACLS expands the forms, content, and flow of scholarly knowledge, reflecting its commitment to diversity of identity and experience. ACLS collaborates with institutions, associations, and individuals to strengthen the evolving infrastructure for scholarship.

About the American Historical Association

Founded in 1884 and incorporated by Congress in 1889 for the promotion of historical studies, the [American Historical Association](#) provides leadership for the discipline and promotes the critical role of historical thinking in public life. The Association defends academic freedom, develops professional standards, supports innovative scholarship and teaching, and helps to sustain and enhance the work of historians. As the largest membership association of professional historians in the world (nearly 11,000 members), the AHA serves historians in a wide variety of professions and represents every historical era and geographical area. Learn more at [historians.org](#).

About the Modern Language Association

The [Modern Language Association of America](#) and its 20,000 members work to strengthen the study and teaching of languages and literature. Founded in 1883, the MLA provides opportunities for its members to share their scholarly findings and teaching experiences with colleagues and to discuss trends in the academy. The MLA sustains a wide-ranging print and electronic publishing program that includes books, journals, style guides, and an international bibliography. More information on MLA programs is available at [www.mla.org](#).

Media Contacts:

Heather Mangrum, ACLS Director of Communications, hmangrum@accls.org

Alexandra Levy, AHA Director of Communications & Public Affairs, alevy@historians.org

Anna Chang, MLA Director of Outreach, achang@mla.org

For interview requests, please contact hmangrum@accls.org (ACLS), press@historians.org (AHA), and press@mla.org (MLA).

###