

NCPH Call to Action

Public historians who work either in or with the federal government are currently under attack. On January 20 and 21, 2025, President Donald Trump signed a series of executive orders that included direct attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) activities in the federal government. These include:

- “Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs And Preferencing,” which orders the elimination of DEI offices and other DEI initiatives within the federal government;
- “Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government,” which prohibits the federal government from funding programs that acknowledge gender identity; and
- “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity,” which ends affirmative action enforcement for federal contractors and requires that contractors and grant awardees do not promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

On January 27, 2025, a Memorandum from the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB M-25-13) directed federal agencies to temporarily pause the disbursements of grants and loans on a wide range of programs. A judge temporarily halted the freeze, and on January 29, the administration rescinded the federal funding freeze order. At the time of this statement, however, it is unclear whether or not the funding freeze remains in effect. Reports suggest some agencies have yet to see their funding restored.

Then, news broke on February 3, 2025 that Elon Musk and employees with the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) gained unauthorized access to the Treasury Department platform that pays federal employees, compromising sensitive personal data. Developing news stories reveal additional efforts by Musk, DOGE, and the Trump administration to exercise unconstitutional power over federal spending, threaten civil service protection, and dismantle the federal government.

President Trump’s executive orders, the OMB memorandum, and subsequent actions by the DOGE have created tremendous confusion, restricted access to critical funds, and impeded the ability of public historians in the federal government and beyond to do their work. They do not only impact the archivists, archeologists, cultural resource specialists, grant funders, park rangers, historians, curators, and museum specialists who work as federal employees. They also impact the consultants and organizations who either do work for the federal government or receive federal funding. This includes NCPH, which holds membership in the Chesapeake Watershed Cooperative Ecosystem Support Unit and which supports public history projects with the National Park Service via Task Agreements.

Please join the National Council on Public History in defending public historians and advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusiveness in the workplace, in historical

interpretation, and in historical scholarship. We urge you to contact your congressional representatives and express your objections to any administrative action that:

- undermines the ability of public historians both inside and outside the federal government to conduct crucial civic work;
- targets diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives;
- freezes previously-authorized federal funding;
- undermines the United State's longstanding commitment to professional, non-partisan civil service; and/or
- allows for the dismissal of federal workers or the dissolution of federal departments, agencies, or offices by the Department of Government Efficiency.

The National Council on Public History urges members to contact their representatives via postcard, letter, or phone call. Emails and other mass messaging platforms like petitions are often ignored. With postcards, letters, or phone calls, make sure the postmark or area code matches the representative's congressional district. Consider highlighting how these executive orders are an unconstitutional expansion of executive power and threaten congressional control over federal spending (the "power of the purse"), a point that should resonate with representatives across the political spectrum. You can find and contact your congressional representatives here: <https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>.

The NCPH Advocacy Committee will host a virtual letter and postcard-writing event this **Friday, February 7, 2025, from 2:00 - 3:00 pm Eastern** via Zoom. Bring your postcard and letter-writing supplies, and we will provide ideas, tips, and company while you write to your representatives. Register by completing the form here <https://community.ncph.org/event/Postcards> and we will send you a Zoom link. We also encourage members who might have the capacity to organize similar in-person gatherings of public historians in your area to find additional community support in this challenging time. Reach out to ncph@iu.edu if you'd like to publicize such an event within the NCPH community.