



## Society of Vertebrate Paleontology

1660 International Drive, Suite 600

McLean, VA 22102

Phone: (301) 634-7024 Fax: (703) 506-3266

Email: [svp@vertpaleo.org](mailto:svp@vertpaleo.org) Web: [www.vertpaleo.org](http://www.vertpaleo.org)

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March 28, 2025

To:

The Honorable John Thune  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators John Thune and Charles Schumer and House Representatives Mike Johnson and Hakeem Jeffries:

I am president of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP: <http://vertpaleo.org>), and I am reaching out to you on behalf of our leadership (signatories below) as well as our Society as a whole. SVP is a non-profit international scientific organization with approximately 2,000 members comprising researchers, educators, students, and enthusiasts, to advance the field of vertebrate paleontology. We would truly appreciate it if you would give the highest possible attention to SVP's concerns described in this letter. On Friday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, the Trump Administration issued an executive order (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/continuing-the-reduction-of-the-federal-bureaucracy/>) eliminating core functions of the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). We are greatly concerned with this situation, because IMLS is the only federal entity dedicated to supporting museums and serves all 50 states and territories.

IMLS's grants aid in enhancing the preservation and utility of already-existing paleontological (fossil) collections, which museums are tasked with housing and caring for in perpetuity, often with little to no support from local, state, and federal land management agencies. Over the last 27 years, IMLS grants have funded over \$8.3 million in paleontological museum collections projects. As an example, they funded the rehousing of specimens with both national historic and scientific interest, including the personal fossil collection of President Thomas Jefferson at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia and Othniel C. Marsh's historic collection of dinosaur fossils at Yale University's Peabody Museum. Digitization efforts of fossils funded by the IMLS enhance research potential and broaden outreach opportunities to areas far beyond the physical reach of museums, including rural areas. Examples of recent digitization projects funded by IMLS include fossils from the lands of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and fossils housed at the rural Pioneer Trails Regional Museum in North Dakota. IMLS grants also aid in developing education programs for students and the public using in-person and digital resources, including recent projects

at the Tate Geological Museum of Casper College in Wyoming and Raymond M. Alf Museum of Paleontology in California.

Ultimately, the planned actions are economically counterproductive and shortsighted, as museums are important economic engines, returning much more than that invested in them in economic activity, both direct and indirect. The proposed reductions would ironically cost more than they purport to save in the loss of local economic activity, local business activities, and lost local and tax incomes. According to the American Alliance of Museums, more Americans attend museums annually than professional sporting events, and museums generate \$5 in tax revenue for every \$1 of government support - contributing \$50 billion to the U.S. economy annually. Specifically of concern to our Society, fossils are an enormously popular component of the museum ecosystem and help to drive museum attendance and support, with 96% of Americans surveyed in favor of increasing funding to museums.

Fossils are also crucial scientific evidence that inform our understanding of biology, biodiversity, and ecology. Museums preserve and make available those data in service of the public trust, and for these reasons SVP advocates for maintaining or increasing the amount of funding available to museums. Scientists in many fields can trace their inspiration to ask questions and explore the natural world to early experiences seeing fossils in museums. Continued reduction in federal support jeopardizes access to paleontology among all Americans, from children and their families to the scientific research community.

IMLS is a necessary component of the federal government, supporting institutions across the U.S. that are critical components of our communities. Therefore, we ask members of Congress to sign onto a letter drafted by Representatives Titus (NV-01) and Bonamici (OR-01) asking the Administration to reconsider the executive order. We also ask the Trump Administration to recognize the negative impacts to communities across the nation if IMLS is reduced or eliminated, and to restore its core functions and service to the museum community and its supporting public.

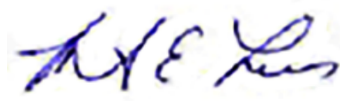
Respectfully,



Stuart S. Sumida, PhD  
*SVP President*



Kristi Curry-Rogers, PhD  
*SVP Vice President*



Margaret E. Lewis, PhD  
*SVP Past President*

cc:

The Honorable John Thune, Majority Leader, U.S. Senate (c/o Ms. Jessica McBride:  
jessica\_mcbride@thune.senate.gov)

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate (c/o Ms. Meghan Taira:  
meghan\_taira@schumer.senate.gov)

The Honorable Mike Johnson, The Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives (c/o Mr. Garrett Fultz:  
garrett.fultz@mail.house.gov)

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives (c/o Ms. Zoe Oreck:  
zoe.oreck@mail.house.gov)