NORGES MUSEUMS ~ FORBUND

PRESSEMELDING

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Trump signs orders to eliminate agency that funds museums and libraries and diminish the freedom of museums to control their content and integrity

The Norwegian Museums Association expresses concern as President Trump takes several actions to control and influence the American museums. President Trump first took action to eliminate, amongst other agencies, the Institute of Museum and Library Service (IMLS). Today IMLS provides grants to libraries, museums and related institutions across USA.

Museums and libraries are vital for education, research, culture, and democracy. In an increasingly uncertain and challenging geopolitical situation, museums and libraries represent some of our most trustworthy institutions in society. They serve a vital purpose as our collective memory, as well as arenas for free and open speech. Eliminating the only federal agency dedicated to supporting museums and libraries undermines their critical role and is a serious blow to cultural institutions that rely on federal support.

President Trump as well wants to take control of the content and the exhibitions through the Presidential Order "Restoring truth and sanity to American history". This is a clear violation of the ICOM Code of Ethics 10.1. stating: "Regardless of funding source, museums should maintain control of the content and integrity of their programmes, exhibitions and activities. Income-generating activities should not compromise the standards of the institution or its public (see 6.6)". ICOM Code of Ethics is an important basis for the work in museums all over the world.

With different measures, President Trump aims to control and rewrite history, which threatens collective memories in society. While he gives Vice President Vance, as chairman of the Smithsonian Board of Regents, the responsibility to eliminate "improper, decisive, or anti-American ideology from the Smithsonian, encompassing its museums, education and research centers, and National Zoo". The order specifically names the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the forthcoming Women's History Museum as institutions subject to review. President Trump appointed himself as chairman of the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts earlier this year.

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We must all be on guard towards measures that will limit academic freedom, the museums' freedom of expression and ability to curate content on a free basis. Likewise, diminishing support for the arts and humanities devaluates cultural institutions and represents a huge disservice to future generations.

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