

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 13, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

I write to share my deep concern with the firing of the leader of the United States Library of Congress (Library), Dr. Carla Hayden, and urge the immediate reinstatement of Dr. Hayden to her Senate-confirmed position as Librarian of Congress.

On May 8, this Administration continued its attacks on our nation's cultural, research, and educational institutions by summarily firing the esteemed Dr. Carla Hayden, the Librarian of Congress—without warning and without cause. As a reminder, the Library of Congress is a nonpartisan institution, encompassing the United States Copyright Office, the Congressional Research Service, and the Law Library of Congress, which serves all members of Congress and the public, regardless of political affiliation. The Library of Congress is one of the largest research libraries in the world, hosting a vast collection of books and historical documents. The Library also stores collections of rare books, prints, photographs, music, manuscripts, and artifacts, among other national treasures that underpin the foundation of our great nation. It is an essential resource to Americans across the country from all political backgrounds.

As you know, Dr. Carla Hayden was both the first woman and the first African American to hold the post of the Librarian of Congress and was the first professional librarian to hold the post since 1974—a testament to her expertise and leadership. Dr. Hayden had a strong record of service during her 10-year term, working to digitize the Library's collection and strengthen the Library's digital infrastructure. She fulfilled her mission admirably, under both Democratic and Republican Presidents, including you during your first term. According to Dr. Hayden's former employers at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, her "tenure at the Library of Congress has been marked by expanded public access, modernization, and a commitment to making one of the nation's most treasured institutions more inclusive and accessible."¹ House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries has touted Dr. Hayden as "an accomplished, principled and distinguished Librarian of Congress."² In an oversight hearing the week that Dr. Hayden was fired, House Administration Committee Chairman Bryan Steil acknowledged that the Library "has been effective at improving its operations and processes in recent years."³

¹ <https://www.prattlibrary.org/about-us/in-support-carla-hayden>

² <https://jeffries.house.gov/2025/05/08/leader-jeffries-statement-on-the-firing-of-librarian-of-congress-dr-carla-hayden/>

³ <https://cha.house.gov/press-releases?id=C40F39CE-F31A-4EDD-A271-EF14392B4912>

Yet on May 9, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt incorrectly accused Dr. Hayden of malfeasance, saying “we don’t believe that she was serving the interests of the American taxpayer well,” following the pattern that the Administration has used to notify thousands of other dedicated civil servants of their termination. In those notices, the Administration accused federal workers with “not [being] fit for continued employment because [their] ability, knowledge and skills do not fit the Agency’s current needs, and [their] performance has not been adequate to justify further employment.”⁴ Leavitt further alleged that “there were quite concerning things that [Dr. Hayden] had done at the Library of Congress in the pursuit of DEI and putting inappropriate books in the library for children,” seemingly confused about the role of both the Library and Librarian of Congress. The Library of Congress does not, in fact, lend books to either adults or children in the general public.⁵

These paltry and unsubstantiated excuses lay bare that the termination of Dr. Hayden was simply one more politically motivated attack on our nation’s civil servants, institutions, and norms. Further, the firing calls into question whether Dr. Hayden was targeted simply because of the historic and trailblazing nature of her appointment. Just hours before her dismissal, the American Accountability Foundation—the same conservative organization that created the website “DEI Watchlist”—called for Dr. Hayden to be fired on social media. This organization’s “watchlist” is a compiled list of “dossiers” on public servants that it believes should be targeted for dismissal. The majority of civil servants on this list are women or people of color, oftentimes both, and have since been the subject of retaliation and dismissal by this Administration. Many have reportedly feared for their public safety.

Given this context, I am compelled to share details about Dr. Hayden’s exemplary background and qualifications to underscore the gravity of your error. Dr. Hayden began her career at the Chicago Public Library. After earning a PhD in library science from the University of Chicago, she became an associate professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Information Sciences, dedicating herself to educating the next generation of librarians. Dr. Hayden then served as the CEO of Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, in the great state of Maryland for over two decades, overhauling the city’s public library system and enshrining the library as a center of the community. Dr. Hayden was confirmed in a bipartisan vote of 74-18 by the Senate in 2016. Dr. Hayden was clearly best positioned to lead the Library and advance its mission of preserving and providing access to a rich and enduring source of knowledge to inform, inspire, and engage the American public.

Dr. Hayden’s termination is not this Administration’s first attack on either civil servants or libraries. On March 14, you issued an Executive Order that explicitly called for the elimination of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), in violation of statutory obligations under the Museum and Library Services Act. On March 20, you appointed the Deputy Secretary of Labor, Keith Sonderling, as the Acting Director of the IMLS, essentially installing a political figure-head to supervise the demolition of a non-partisan agency. Since then, over eighty percent of IMLS staff have been placed on administrative leave, raising concerns about the future of libraries across the country. A federal judge underscored the illegality of these mass layoffs by

⁴ <https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/court-filings/state-of-new-york-et-al-v-robert-f-kennedy-united-states-department-of-health-and-human-services-et-al-complaint-2025.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/09/us/politics/hayden-library-of-congress-dei.html>

issuing a temporary restraining order against the Administration from taking further action against IMLS.⁶ Further, on March 28, Secretary Hegseth ordered the United States Naval Academy to remove over 381 books from the Academy's Nimitz Library, including books by acclaimed author Maya Angelou, and on topics related to race, gender, and the Holocaust. Together, these actions comprise a deeply concerning and brazen assault on academic freedoms, and the educational institutions on which our nation relies.

The Library of Congress, like the other federal agencies that have been attacked by this Administration, urgently needs a dedicated public servant with a proven track record of success at the helm, to preserve the integrity of our nation's research systems and institutions. Therefore, I urge you to immediately reinstate Dr. Hayden and issue a swift and public apology for the harm you have caused Dr. Hayden, her family, and the staff at the Library of Congress.

Sincerely,



Angela Alsobrooks
United States Senator

⁶ https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.dcd.279257/gov.uscourts.dcd.279257.36.0_1.pdf