

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED  
SOCIETIES, et al.,

*Plaintiffs,*  
v.

ADAM WOLFSON, in his official capacity as  
Acting Chairman of the National Endowment  
for the Humanities, et al.,

*Defendants.*

Case No. 1:25-cv-03657

**DECLARATION OF SARAH WEICKSEL**

1. I, Sarah Weicksel, am Executive Director at the American Historical Association (AHA). I am a professional historian (PhD, University of Chicago). The statements made in this declaration are based on my personal knowledge and understanding of information made available to me pursuant to my duties at the American Historical Association.

2. The American Historical Association was founded in 1884 and incorporated by Congress in 1889. The AHA promotes historical work and the importance of historical thinking in public life. Its mission to enhance the work of historians also encompasses professional standards and ethics, innovative scholarship and teaching, academic freedom, and international collaboration. As the largest membership association of historians in the world (more than 10,000 members), the AHA serves historians in a wide variety of professions and represents every historical era and geographical area.

3. I have been executive director of the AHA since July 1, 2025, and have been a member since 2011. Before becoming executive director, I served as the AHA's director of

research and publications. I have served as the project director for two NEH grants awarded to the AHA, including an Institute for Higher Education Faculty grant cancelled in April 2025. I have a comprehensive understanding of the AHA and the significance of collaboration with and support from the NEH since my arrival at the AHA in 2020. In recent years the AHA has turned increasingly towards various aspects of professional development for its constituencies; this development has benefitted substantially from not only NEH financial support but also conversations with, and insights from, NEH staff.

### **Termination of Grants**

4. I and additional AHA staff members invested substantial time developing proposals for two grants that were terminated—an Institute for K-12 Educators (Africa in World History) and an Institute for Higher Education Faculty (Change across the Land: Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century United States Environmental History and Policy)—as well as another grant proposal for a program that was terminated. This extensive work included research, curriculum planning, recruitment of faculty, making logistical arrangements, planning site visits and tours, and developing budgets. Each grant application required dozens of hours of staff time to develop, gather feedback from NEH staff, and further refine. Consultation with NEH staff was essential to developing the grant proposals. They provided advice to ensure the proposals met NEH’s guidelines and offered constructive recommendations to strengthen the proposals and the positive impact the institutes would have had on their participants and their students.

5. The award notification for our grant proposals for an NEH Institute for Higher Education faculty entitled “Change Across the Land: Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century United States Environmental History and Policy,” was received by email in August 2025. We received official notification of the award on March 11, 2025. Award notification for our grant for an

NEH Institute for K-12 Educators, on “Africa in World History,” was received on September 17, 2024. Each of these institutes responded to indications from teachers of strong demand from their institutions for the broad subject, interest among students, and inadequate preparation in these topics on the part of the instructors. Because the NEH’s program for institutes for teachers does not have a required topical focus, it enables the AHA and other organizations to respond to the needs of our constituencies.

6. After being awarded the NEH grants to support the two institutes, AHA staff undertook significant work to organize both programs, including: designing project websites and incorporating feedback from NEH staff and peer reviewers, creating application guidelines, revising budgets, marketing the programs to generate interest and applications, coordinating among the institute’s faculty, creating an application review rubric, and recruiting review panelists. Staff created syllabi, reading lists and the institute schedule, began gathering sources for inclusion in projects, researched accommodations and transportation for participants, responded to applicant queries, processed financial paperwork, and attended required NEH webinars. Together with outside reviewers, AHA senior staff reviewed and ranked a combined total of 220 applications to select 30 participants for the K-12 Institute and 25 participants for the Higher Ed Institute.

7. On April 1, 2025, the AHA received emails from the NEH reminding us to notify all institute applicants on April 2 as to whether they had been accepted, waitlisted, or rejected for participation in the institutes. On April 2, the AHA sent notifications to all applicants.

8. On April 3, the AHA received two emails from [Grant\\_Notifications@NEHemail.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:Grant_Notifications@NEHemail.onmicrosoft.com) informing us that the grants were being terminated.

9. The notifications appeared to be form letters. These letters were not in the NEH's grants management system, eGMS.

10. The notifications did not include any specific information about why the grants were terminated or how to appeal the decisions.

11. The AHA emailed its NEH Higher Ed Institute grants officer to inquire as to the validity of the email terminating received from

Grant\_Notifications@NEHemail.onmicrosoft.com

12. On April 4, AHA staff received from institutes@neh.gov emails pertaining to both of our summer institutes. The emails included the following text:

Due to a change in the Administration's funding priorities, DOGE has made the decision to terminate NEH awards, including 2025 professional development programs. We are aware that some award recipients have already received termination letters. At this time, NEH does not know the full scope of which awards have been terminated and who has been notified. We know that this action affects the participants you recently notified about their summer 2025 participation. If you received a termination letter, the following message can be sent to those successful applicants and applicants on your waitlist.

Dear Participant,

The NEH has provided the following statement:

*We regret to inform you that this NEH [Institutes or Landmarks] program will no longer be offered due to DOGE's termination of the grant award. We do not have any more information to share at this time.*

### **Effects of Grant Termination**

13. Upon receiving grant termination notices, the AHA had to terminate all planned programming, notify all accepted applicants, institutional partners, and institute faculty of the program's termination, and respond to accepted applicants' queries about the termination. The termination notices also created significant and detrimental budget ramifications for the remainder of the AHA's current and upcoming fiscal years. AHA had relied on revenue from

these grants, and portions of staff salaries and indirect costs no longer covered by the grants have had to be absorbed into the AHA's operating budget. This has reduced the AHA's capacity to complete everyday business operations, contributed to a projected overall organizational budget deficit for the current fiscal year, and jeopardizes the ability to retain staff for the upcoming year unless other grant funds are secured.

14. As a result of the grant terminations, the AHA's mission, finances, and reputation have been harmed. As the Association increasingly directs energies towards professional development, NEH institutes provide both useful experience and valuable credibility in the broader marketplace for resources for in-service teachers. Like other scholarly associations traditionally reliant on revenue from publications and conferences, the AHA has begun to pivot towards a more diversified income model. Professional development for history teachers at various levels is a major part of this new approach and NEH institutes build both reputation and constituency. They also provide opportunities for AHA staff to learn what is happening in classrooms across the country, enabling us to generate new and related projects such as the *American Lesson Plan*, the most thorough analysis in the 21st century of what is taught in secondary school US history and social studies classes. NEH institutes, whether for secondary or college teachers, are intellectually stimulating environments for learning, benefiting participants, faculty, and staff.

15. Upon award of the grants, AHA staff time and resources were reallocated to enable the development of the institute programs.

16. The termination of the AHA's grants diminishes our organization's reputation among higher ed faculty and K-12 educators. NEH institutes support innovation in format as well as content to produce high-quality professional development opportunities for educators. An

NEH institute enhances the visibility and prestige of an organization's professional development program, in part because of the rigorous peer review process, and in part because of the professionalism required to develop and administer NEH sponsored gatherings. The termination of a grant does precisely the opposite, diminishing our ability to continue to build and broaden our overall professional development initiative. The AHA planned to build on these two institutes to offer future programming for educators. The cancellation of these grants eliminated this opportunity for the AHA, making it more difficult to develop programming in the future and attract teaching faculty and participants. Furthermore, the termination of the grants forced the AHA to rescind 55 educators' professional development opportunities within 48 hours of their initial acceptance, thereby diminishing the reputation of our organization in the eyes of our constituency.

17. The AHA has also suffered harm as the result of the termination of funds awarded to the American Council of Learned Societies to support a cooperative agreement with NEH on a National Convening on Graduate Education in the Humanities. This project's proposal was written by ACLS leadership in collaboration with the AHA, the Modern Language Association, and the Society of Biblical Literature. The AHA invested significant time on the proposal from June 1 through August 6, 2024.

18. Due to the termination of this cooperative agreement, the project lost six months of progress and will not be completed under the auspices of NEH. This work would have been greatly enhanced by the involvement of NEH as a cooperative partner. The project has suffered the loss of NEH staff expertise, the Endowment's scholarly networks, and the national visibility that accompanies an NEH-funded project.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on March 5, 2026, in Washington, DC.



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Sarah Weicksel  
Executive Director  
American Historical Association