

## Minnesota communities fight Trump's restrictions on \$500M in federal grants

Hundreds of millions in federal money for a variety of public programs are at risk under stipulations in the president's executive orders.

[By Christopher Magan](#)

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Leaders of Minnesota's largest cities and counties are poring over the fine print of federal grants and expanding their legal fights to protect more than \$500 million in funding.

Minneapolis and St. Paul, along with Hennepin and Ramsey counties, joined lawsuits that originated on the West Coast to fight the Trump administration's efforts to withhold federal funding to jurisdictions that don't follow the president's executive orders. That funding had already been approved by Congress.

The conflict is centered on the administration's threats to communities to comply with its immigration policies. The fight continues to broaden and this month communities successfully petitioned a judge to to expand their case to challenge the administration's stipulations about communities' diversity and gender identity policies.

A judge has temporarily blocked the administration's attempts to withhold funds saying communities shouldn't have to follow policies they feel are unconstitutional. Local leaders say the litigation is likely headed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"Imposing extreme political conditions on critical funding for Minneapolis and other local governments across the country is undemocratic and unlawful," said Minneapolis City Attorney Kristyn Anderson, who noted \$60 million in ongoing grant funding is at risk. "We are suing to defend the city's right to make policy decisions that best meet our residents' needs and support thriving communities across Minneapolis."

The threats have taken on both a new sense of urgency and fresh confusion after the Trump administration released a new list of "sanctuary jurisdictions" on Aug. 5 that included the entire state of Minnesota. Local leaders noted no Minnesota cities or counties were on the latest list, but previously the administration had targeted dozens of communities with the "sanctuary" label.

"It's confusing and hard to react to something that is a moving target," said Commissioner Rafael Ortega, chair of the Ramsey County Board. County officials estimated this spring that \$147 million in federal grants could be subject to the restrictions the administration was trying to implement.

“The impact of losing that money would be huge. It’s 30% of the county budget. There’s no way to make up for that,” Ortega said.

Earlier this year, St. Paul leaders estimated \$50 million in federal grants could be at risk from various Trump administration freezes and restrictions.

Local leaders emphasized they were not trying to pick a fight with the administration, but need to protect important funding already approved by Congress that provides essential services to residents. Money for affordable housing, health programs, public safety initiatives and infrastructure could all be at risk under new rules.

“We are scrutinizing everything as it has been changing and evolving,” said David Hough, Hennepin County’s outgoing administrator. “We want to preserve and protect what we have been doing, which has always been legal.”

Hennepin County leaders say \$271 million worth federal grants could possibly be withheld under new orders from the Trump administration.

Minnesota is in the administration’s crosshairs for a variety of policies about immigration and diversity the president dislikes.

Minnesota has no jurisdictions that identify themselves as “sanctuaries” for unauthorized immigrants, but a number of communities, including Minneapolis and St. Paul, have policies that limit cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to when it is required by law.

In some cases, communities are at legal risk if they comply with requests to hold people for ICE. A number of rural counties were frustrated earlier this summer when they unexpectedly ended up on a sanctuary list.

The uncertainty around federal grants comes at an already challenging time for cities and counties that are trying to respond to other state and federal budget changes.

The recent state budget includes incremental changes to local funding and Trump’s “Big Beautiful Bill” will bring cuts to Medicaid and food stamp programs along with work requirements local leaders say will be expensive to implement.

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