

Smithsonian Yields to Trump on its Historical Narrative

By Don Sutherland

When power dictates truth, truth loses its integrity. When those in power control the historical record, we forfeit not only our collective memory but also the vital lessons history has to offer.

On July 31, 2025, *The Washington Post* reported:

The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in July removed references to President Donald Trump's two impeachments from an exhibit display. A person familiar with the exhibit plans, who was not authorized to discuss them publicly, said the change came about as part of a content review that the Smithsonian agreed to undertake following pressure from the White House to remove an art museum director.

The National Museum of American History's website proclaims:

We cherish our unique role as the only museum in the country dedicated to telling the full history of the United States. Knowledge of the past is not a luxury—it is vital for civic health. Learning history helps people understand that today's world is not inevitable, but the result of myriad choices and actions made by individuals and communities. With this knowledge, they can take more informed, just, and compassionate actions to forge a shared future.

Donald Trump's two impeachments and his role in the January 6, 2021 insurrection are indisputably part of American history. These events are not anomalies but markers of a constitutional framework under strain. The insurrection was a stark and violent manifestation of that erosion. Equally significant is what followed: the Senate's refusal to convict and the legal system's ongoing failure to hold Trump accountable. These are profound warnings of democratic fragility and signals of potential peril ahead.

Yet the Smithsonian Institution chose to erase this chapter from public view. In doing so, it betrayed its stated mission of "exploring, preserving, and sharing the complexity of our past," and undermined its vision of becoming "the country's most accessible, inclusive, relevant, and sustainable public history institution."

Such a political decision cannot rewrite history, but it can obscure it. By allowing power to dictate what is remembered, the Smithsonian diminishes public understanding and weakens the civic capacity of future generations. Its capitulation raises serious questions about whether it can still be regarded as a trustworthy steward of the nation's historical record.