

Trump’s Firing of Half of the Department of Education’s Staff Will Gut Educational Opportunities for Millions of Students

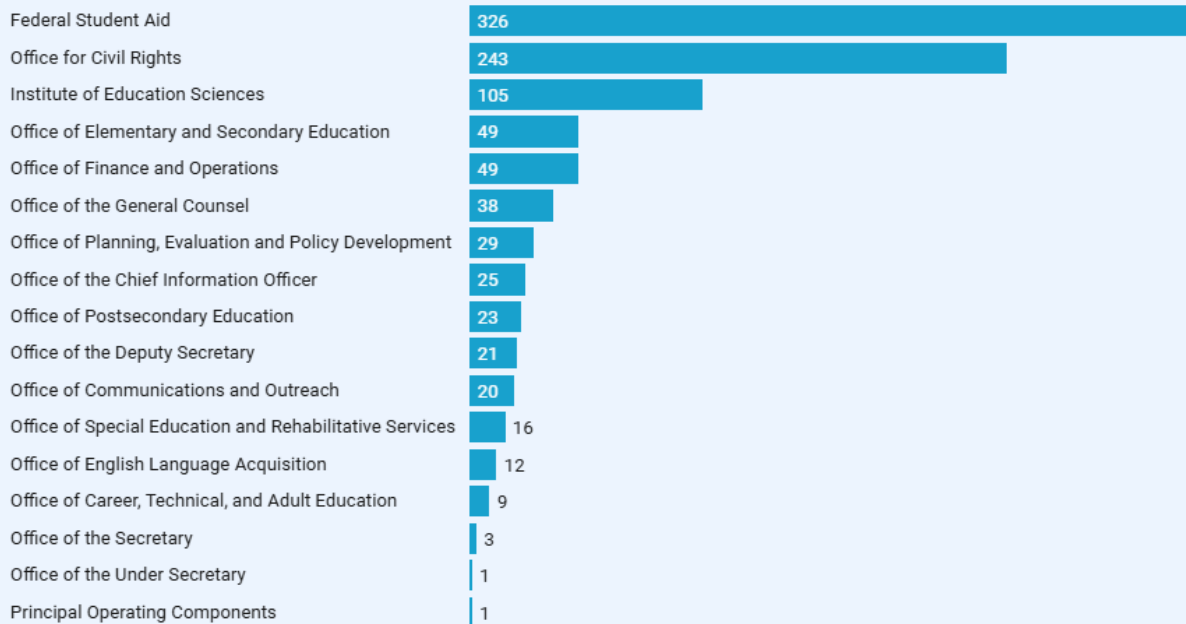
Data on how the Department of Education benefits students in YOUR STATE is available [HERE](#).

Background:

On Tuesday, March 12th, 2025, Secretary McMahon [announced](#) they would initiate ‘reductions in force’ (“RIF”) of Department of Education (“ED”) staff, laying off 47.1 percent of staff (1,950 civil servants). At the start of the Trump Administration, the Department of Education had employed 4,133 civil servants. Fired staff will be placed on administrative leave starting March 21. Those employees will receive pay and benefits through June 9 and severance pay or retirement benefits.

[Education Reform Now](#) has a running list of ED offices and programs that have been disrupted. Note: *HELP staff has not independently verified these numbers:*

A Snapshot of who Got Cut at ED on March 11



While this is an evolving situation, here is what we know as of 3/12/25:

The Trump Administration fired the civil rights staff that protects students from discrimination related to race, sex, disability status, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and more, and cut down 12 regional offices to 5. They fired all the staff who conduct civil rights investigations in the regions of Dallas, Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York City, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. Those offices served students in 24 states. Over 22,000 complaints about discrimination filed annually won’t have enough staff to investigate them. Currently, there are 50 cases per OCR investigative staff. Just in 2013, it used to be 20 cases per staff. These cuts will make it much, much worse.

The Trump Administration fired the staff that supports 7.5 million children with disabilities served by IDEA: They fired career staff that lead policy and grant coordination for IDEA programs including early intervention, K-12 funding, special educator preparation, and parent information training. They also fired staff who conduct oversight of IDEA to ensure that States are following the law. This will impact the rights of students with disabilities to receive the free appropriate public education they are entitled to.

The Trump Administration fired the staff that helps get Title I funds to the 26 million students and two-thirds of public schools that rely on it: They fired career staff that interfaces with States to draw down federal K-12 funding, including Title I, afterschool and summer programs, teacher support, etc. They also fired all staff that protect English learners. This will significantly delay money reaching schools in a timely fashion.

The Trump Administration fired the staff that hold for-profit colleges accountable: They gutted the offices in charge of overseeing colleges to ensure they provide accurate information to students, are financially stable, and are held accountable for any wrongdoing. Without these staff, students across the country, including our nation's veterans, will be left vulnerable to predatory for-profit colleges that thrive in an environment with little oversight.

The Trump Administration fired the staff who keep the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) running smoothly. They cut staff that help ensure the FAFSA form is processed smoothly and promptly. Millions of students and families that apply for federal financial aid each year could once again face delays, errors, and mishaps on the form they need to submit in order to have the funds to go to college.

The Trump Administration fired the staff that protects and helps student loan borrowers. Musk and his DOGE lackeys gutted the Student Loan Ombudsman's office in charge of receiving, fielding, and responding to complaints from student loan borrowers. Without these public servants, borrowers across the country will have little to no recourse if their servicers send them incorrect billing statements, fail to process PSLF or other forgiveness forms, wrongfully deny forgiveness, provide false information, or fail to accurately process payments.

The Trump Administration fired the career lawyers who ensure political staff follow the law: They fired most of the career attorneys who reign in staff and stop unlawful actions. This will further enable the Trump Administration to break federal law and illegally require schools, colleges, and universities to follow their far-right political agenda.

The Trump Administration fired all the career scientists and statisticians who support education research, data, and statistics: They fired nearly all of the career education research experts who release data, statistics, and research. Our nation will be in the dark about all the challenges students face and the evidence-based practices we need to improve education.

Talking Points:

- Let's be clear: President Trump is not a King. He does not have the authority to unilaterally abolish or dismantle the Department of Education, nor does he have the authority to freeze funding appropriated by Congress for education programs.
- The Trump Administration's reckless reduction in force of the Department of Education creates chaos and uncertainty for every public school, college, and university across our country.
- The Department of Education exists to expand educational opportunities in this country and enforce students' civil rights.
 - At a time of massive income and wealth inequality, the Department's work—making college more affordable, increasing funding for high-need schools, ensuring a free and appropriate public education for children with disabilities, and more—is more crucial than ever.
- Abolishing the Department of Education is deeply unpopular with the public: [58 percent of voters](#) across the political spectrum oppose eliminating the U.S. Department of Education.
- Gutting the Department of Education's programs and the staff that administer them will have serious consequences.
 - Funds appropriated by Congress in a bipartisan manner may not reach the students and schools that rely on them, particularly on a timely basis.
 - Students' civil rights complaints—which have grown each year for the past decade—may be ignored or weaponized.
 - Student loan borrowers would be left in the lurch and their calls and questions would go unanswered, leaving them at risk of default. Student debt relief that was promised to our public servants or defrauded borrowers would fail to be delivered.
 - There will be minimal oversight of predatory, misleading colleges, leaving students vulnerable to fraud.
 - Billions of dollars in federal education grants may not be disbursed or not monitored for fraud, waste, and abuse due to reckless mismanagement.
 - Students with disabilities' basic educational rights will be in jeopardy exacerbating the already longstanding disparities and barriers they face.
 - Accurate statistics and data on student achievement and challenges facing our nation's education system will be lost.
- This reduction in force is meant to distract the American people from paying attention to what Trump has accomplished for the nation's students—which is nothing.
 - Instead, he attempted to illegally freeze billions of dollars in federal funding, censor what is taught in the classroom, intimidate teachers, villainize LGBTQ+ students, and allow books to be banned. Now, he is seeking to abolish the Department of Education.
- It's time to stop playing political games with students, families, and borrowers and focus on the issues that matter—improving the lives of the American people.

The Reach of ED:

The Department of Education reaches every community across the country:

- 26 million students from low-income backgrounds and over 100,000 public schools in every State benefit under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
- 9.8 million students enrolled in 6,000 rural school districts benefit under the Rural Education Achievement Program.
- 7.5 million students with disabilities benefit under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- 5 million English Language Learner students benefit under Title III of the ESEA.
- 1.1 million students experiencing homelessness benefit under the McKinney-Vento program.
- Nearly 800,000 children living near military bases, Native American reservations, and other Federal properties benefit under Impact Aid.
- 850,000 students benefit from the Full-Service Community Schools program.
- More than 1.5 million youth and their families benefit from local summer and afterschool programs under the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.
- Nearly 7 million students each year receive a Pell Grant—about 1 in every 3 undergraduate students.
- Over 10 million students rely on Pell Grants and Student loans to attend college.
- Over 42 million student loan borrowers across the country.
- Over 880,00 students benefit from Federal TRIO Programs.
- 45,000 students benefit from Second Chance Pell in Prison Education Programs.
- Over 1.09 million students benefit under Title II of WIOA, Adult Education State Grants.
- Over 11 million students are served by the \$1.4 billion in Perkins CTE Grants.
- Approximately 11,000 student parents receive child care under the Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS) program.

A central responsibility of the Department of Education is to identify, investigate, and resolve school violations of civil rights laws, including Title IX of the Education Amendments Of 1972 and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

- [FY 2024](#) saw a record number of complaints filed, at 22,687 complaints, triple the number from 2009. 35 percent of cases were based on disability discrimination.

ED has the [smallest staff](#) of the 15 Cabinet agencies, even though its discretionary budget alone is the third largest, behind only the Departments of Defense and Health and Human Services.