



Federal Policy Update

October 16, 2025

President Trump Administration ordered another round of RIFs (reductions in force) seemingly targeting roughly 450 employees from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). The exact details of what is happening inside the Department remain unclear. Information at this point has been cobbled together from anecdotal evidence like screenshots of RIF email notices to ED employees, the rumor mill, and filings in a Court case challenging the Administration's attempt to enact widespread RIFs across dozens of federal agencies.

In a filing to the court last Friday, the Administration expressed intent to RIF 466 employees from ED, and indicated more may be forthcoming. The Admin stated these employees would receive RIF notices that would "call for separation of employment within 30 or 60 days" indicating that any layoffs would not be immediate but would take effect in November or December. However, employees report being told their work with the Department is over effectively immediately, even if they remain on payroll for the time being. The government shutdown further complicates things because many of the employees subject to the RIFs are currently furloughed. Many employees don't know their current status because most furloughed federal government workers are not permitted to check their work email during furlough. These distinctions are particularly important as the case is on-going. As of yesterday, the federal district court ordered the Administration to temporarily halt RIFs as the case is tried. The court order bars the Administration from moving forward with the RIF notices already issued and from issuing additional notices. However, the Administration will likely appeal this decision and has shown a willingness in the past to continue layoffs despite court orders.

If allowed to continue, the stated RIFs would largely dismantle the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) and Special Education Programs (OSEP). These divisions oversee nearly \$44 billion in K-12 funding, raising serious concerns across the wider education communities about ED's ability to manage major education grants and services, including many that have bipartisan support.

Additionally, most Education Department staff remain furloughed amid the ongoing government shutdown causing ongoing concern about when and how funds will be administered for grant programs. Some key programs like Title I, Title II, Title IV-A, 21 CCLC still have funding available from prior appropriations because they are forward funded. Other programs, like Impact Aid, that are not forward funded and have complex funding formulas to administer—are at risk of being effectively discontinued.

The layoffs are part of a broader effort by the Trump Administration to eliminate thousands of federal positions at agencies, specifically positions that manage programs this Administration dislikes. Critics—including Congressional Democrats and some Republicans—argue the move is an abuse of authority, not required by the shutdown, and contrary to the public interest. Legal challenges have already been filed. Congressional Democrats are calling for a reinstatement of all employees as well as backpay as part of ongoing negotiations to reopen the government. Next steps remain unclear.

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