

Mobilize the working class to fight Trump's destruction of the Department of Education!

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Join the upcoming online meeting of the Educators Rank-and-File Committee (US), “Free Mahmoud Khalil! Mobilize the working class against Trump’s dictatorship! Defend the right to public education!” on Saturday, March 15, at 12:00 p.m. EDT. Register here.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party urge teachers and workers across the United States to prepare mass actions, up to and including coordinated strikes at school districts across the country and in other industries, to stop Trump’s plans to dismantle the Education Department (ED) and all other federal social programs.

This must be prepared from below through the formation of rank-and-file strike committees independent of the sellout union apparatus, which is attempting to limit workers to pointless letter-writing campaigns.

On Tuesday, the Department of Education announced it would eliminate nearly half its workforce, laying off roughly 1,950 employees. This is part of Trump’s broader effort to illegally dismantle the department, circumventing the federal laws that established it.

The immediate consequence of the cuts will be devastating. The employees being eliminated play different roles, with many concentrated in the distribution of federal loans to students and grants to the states. These layoffs are only part of a massive assault on education as a whole, including hundreds of billions in cuts to aid low-income families and other support programs as part of the budget currently working its way through Congress.

In tandem with the attacks on the ED, the US Department of Agriculture announced it is slashing funding for free school lunch programs for impoverished students.

The attack on the ED is part of a broader strategy to privatize education through school vouchers and charter schools. Essential social programs relied on by tens of millions of people are being gutted overnight. The House funding bill proposes devastating cuts, including \$880 billion from Medicare and Medicaid and \$230 billion from food stamps and other vital social programs.

Billionaire fascist Elon Musk, who heads the “Department

of Government Efficiency” (DOGE), is also taking aim at Social Security. With consummate hypocrisy, this crypto swindler and stock market speculator has attacked the program as “the biggest ponzi scheme ever.”

The attack on public education marks the Trump White House as a government of, by and for the corporate oligarchy. Through savage spending cuts it is seeking to reduce the government to the “bodies of armed men and prisons of all kinds” described by Friedrich Engels as the essence of the capitalist state. Trillions of dollars are being redirected from the working class to prop up Wall Street and to prepare for war.

This is bound up with Trump’s attack on democratic rights, including the arrest and planned deportation of Mahmoud Khalil for participating in anti-genocide demonstrations at Columbia University. Trump is establishing the framework for a dictatorship to crush all resistance from below.

Thomas Jefferson described an educated and informed populace as a bulwark against tyranny. This is precisely why the new tyrants are trying to dismantle public education. Trump and the oligarchy are determined to tear up 250 years of progress—including the expansion of education after the Civil War to educate freed slaves and its further expansion as a result of the struggles of the working class.

The fight against Trump’s bid for dictatorship must be combined with a fight to free the working class from the grip of corrupt union officials and the Democratic Party, who are complicit in Trump’s attacks on the working class.

The SEP and the WSWS call for rank-and-file committees of educators, students and working class parents to organize nationwide action. They must not wait for “permission” from above—which will never come—to begin such a life-and-death struggle.

The Democratic Party’s contrived cowardice, including the pitiful display of sign-waving during Trump’s joint address to Congress, is designed to distract from the fact that it *supports the aims of his domestic policies*. Last year, President Biden allowed \$190 billion in supplemental

COVID-19 funding to lapse, creating fiscal cliffs in all major school districts leading directly to school closures.

Moreover, the Democrats are continuing to work with the Republicans, including genuine antisemites, to crush campus protests against the Gaza genocide and slander them as “antisemitic.”

The erosion of public education in Detroit, Chicago and other major cities has taken place primarily under the watch of the Democratic Party. At the national level, the attack on public education under Biden was preceded by Obama’s “Race to the Top” program, which involved the elimination of hundreds of thousands of teachers’ jobs.

The Democrats agree on the need to reduce the federal debt and free up resources for war at the expense of the working class. This is why they suddenly find their voice when it comes to continuing the proxy war in Ukraine. The only major disagreements they have with the Republicans relate to the geopolitical strategy of US imperialism—over which regions of the world to conquer first. They are prepared to give Trump everything else.

The role of the union bureaucracy is marked by the same contrived cowardice. The National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) have issued hand-wringing statements, yet they merely urge workers to write letters to Congress. What they will not do—and what they act far more decisively and ruthlessly to try to prevent—is a nationwide strike by millions of educators and the more than 14 million union members across the country.

The bureaucracy, which long ago abandoned even limited opposition to exploitation, draws six-figure salaries in exchange for enforcing labor peace. To defend their interests, which are totally opposed to those of the workers they claim to represent, many union bureaucrats are openly embracing Trump and fascism.

In a recent editorial on MSNBC’s website, AFT President Randi Weingarten postured as an opponent of the Education Department cuts, even as she declared her willingness to “work with” Education Secretary Linda McMahon, a billionaire who was appointed for the sole purpose of abolishing the department she now leads. Weingarten presented cuts to education as a “national security” issue, implicitly lining up with Trump’s trade wars by arguing that the cuts will weaken America’s ability to compete against its adversaries.

Weingarten is a highly placed political operative, traveling from Israel to Ukraine in support of US militarism. She worked 15 hours a day forcing the reopening of schools, against overwhelming opposition from teachers and parents, during the height of the pandemic. This brought her into contact with open anti-vaxxers now in and around the Trump

administration.

The working class must intervene! Trump’s social counter-revolution and dictatorial measures are provoking and will provoke mass opposition. The conditions exist to unite educators with federal workers, healthcare workers confronting the destruction of public health, manufacturing workers being hit by tariffs and job cuts, and students opposing war and the attack on democratic rights. Major struggles by educators are pending in Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and other cities as the Democrats implement these cuts on the local level.

The development of rank-and-file committees, independent of the trade union apparatus, will unite teachers, students, parents, federal workers, healthcare workers, autoworkers, and every other section of the working class in a coordinated struggle against Trump’s mass layoffs, the destruction of social programs, and the privatization of public education.

Rank-and-file committees will serve as the means by which workers can exchange information, organize across workplaces and regions, and prepare for powerful, collective action, including nationwide strikes. These committees must also unite the fight to defend public education with the struggles of immigrant workers facing deportation, industrial workers fighting layoffs and unsafe conditions, and healthcare workers opposing attacks on Medicaid and Medicare.

Trump’s apparent strength comes from the character of his official “opponents.” But the working class, the most powerful social force in history, can sweep away this filth once it recognizes its strength and knows how to use it. This requires that workers understand they are in a fight not just against Trump, but against the entire capitalist profit system that has produced him, and which is incompatible with the most basic interests of the vast majority of the population.



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