

Trump halts \$7 billion in funds to public schools, triggering mass cuts

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In a major escalation of its assault on public education, the Trump administration announced this week that it would withhold nearly \$7 billion in immediate federal funding for K-12 school districts across the United States. Delivered with less than 24 hours' notice before the July 1 deadline, the announcement has thrown districts into chaos, forcing them to scramble for alternatives and brace for immediate cuts to staff, programs and essential services.

The funding freeze affects every state and territory, with the withheld funds making up at least 10 percent of federal K-12 budgets nationwide. Seventeen states and territories face losses of 15 percent or more.

California, the largest recipient, stands to lose at least \$811 million immediately, followed by Texas (\$660 million), Florida (\$396 million), New York (\$400 million) and Illinois (\$240 million). This will result in devastating cuts.

The Trump administration's funding freeze targets five major federal K-12 education streams:

- **Title I-C: Migrant Education (\$375 million)** provides academic support and supplemental services for the children of migrant farm workers.
- **Title II-A: Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants (\$2.2 billion)** funds teacher professional development, training, and recruitment.
- **Title III-A: English Language Acquisition Grants (\$890 million)** supports English learners, especially immigrant and migrant students, helping them achieve English proficiency and meet academic standards.
- **Title IV-A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (\$1.3 billion)** finances programs for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education, accelerated learning, college and career counseling and initiatives to improve school climate and safety.
- **Title IV-B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers (\$1.4 billion)** sustains before- and after-school programs, offering academic enrichment and safe environments for students outside regular school hours.

In addition to these K-12 streams, the funding freeze also encompasses crucial adult education funding as publicly funded adult education programs are often operated by local school districts.

This includes:

- **Adult Education Basic Grants (\$629.6 million)** which support literacy and instructional services for adults, including basic and secondary education as well as preparation for high school equivalency diplomas.
- **Adult Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education**

Grants (\$85.9 million) which provides targeted support for adult immigrants and English language learners, combining English instruction with civics education to help adults gain language proficiency and understand US civic life and pathways to citizenship.

The US Department of Education sent a memo Monday to all school administrators indicating funds for these programs would not be disbursed, that the funds are "under review" and the Department of Education was "committed to ensuring taxpayer resources are spent in accordance with the president's priorities." No further explanation or timeline was given for when the review would end, what the review sought to investigate, and whether funds will be distributed at a future date.

In fact, the Trump administration has signaled it may seek to permanently eliminate nearly \$7 billion in frozen education funds by formally requesting Congress to rescind the money—a process known as rescission. Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought told the Senate Appropriations Committee that the administration is considering this approach; if a rescission request is submitted, the funds would remain frozen for 45 days and could ultimately expire even if Congress does not act.

Vought acknowledged that using rescission would allow the administration to effectively block the release of funds already approved by Congress. In a recent interview on CNN, Vought said, "It's a provision that has been rarely used, but it is there... and we intend to use all of these tools."

The Supreme Court's recent ruling restricting nationwide injunctions has emboldened the Trump administration to carry out sweeping, unlawful actions—including the freeze on federal education funding—without fear of immediate judicial intervention. The ruling *Trump v. CASA* effectively allows Trump to bypass constitutional and legislative restraints, acting with near impunity. The funding freeze is a direct result of this new legal landscape, accelerating the administration's drive toward authoritarian rule.

Trump administration's funding freeze is an outright illegal impoundment, defying Congress by withholding funds that were already lawfully appropriated. California is at the forefront of these attacks, but the real aim is to establish a precedent for using federal funding as a weapon to impose authoritarian, far-right policies nationwide. By targeting states over Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and related policies, the administration is preparing to withhold billions more—including Title I and IDEA funds for low-income and disabled students—using executive power to override both Congress and democratically enacted laws in service of its reactionary agenda.

In the wake of the Trump administration's abrupt freeze of education funds, districts across the country have begun announcing

immediate and severe measures to cope with the sudden loss of resources. Districts in at least 33 states, including California, Texas and New York, are reporting that they have been forced to halt or suspend after-school and summer programs, cut back on professional development for teachers, lay off staff essential to supporting English learners and migrant students, and utilize reserve funds for a temporary stopgap measure—that is, if districts even have reserve funding. Rural and low-income districts, in particular, are bracing for the hardest impact, as they rely most heavily on these federal funds to provide basic educational supports.

The Trump administration's latest funding freeze is part of an ongoing campaign to dismantle public education entirely, provoking mass opposition from educators, students, and families nationwide. Since taking office, Trump has issued an executive order to begin closing the Department of Education, slashed \$1 billion in grants for K-12 mental health professionals, canceled \$400 million in AmeriCorps funding—gutting tens of thousands of tutoring and mentoring positions—and shut down five regional Head Start offices, signaling plans to eliminate early childhood education entirely. The administration also reversed \$4.4 billion in pandemic aid extensions, stripping schools of urgently needed resources, while the former Biden administration had already ended COVID relief funds for schools.

These attacks are part of a broader drive to privatize education, and transform K-12 and higher education into a pipeline for the war economy and authoritarian rule. The federal budget now before Congress would eliminate or consolidate dozens of K-12 and higher education programs, slashing the Department of Education by more than \$15 billion and accelerating the destruction of public education in favor of “school choice,” business-led job training, and the preparation of youth for militarization and exploitation.

In the face of this unprecedented attack, the response of the Democratic Party and the trade union bureaucracy has been one of complicity, inaction and deliberate attempts to demobilize opposition among workers.

At a July 1 press conference held by the California Department of Education, Superintendent Tony Thurmond and the heads of all major education unions—including the California Teachers Association (CTA), Service Employees International Union Local 99 (SEIU Local 99) and the California Federation of Teachers (CFT)—denounced the illegality of Trump's actions and warned of immediate layoffs and cuts. Yet their only proposed solution was to “pursue every legal avenue” and call on Congress to act. There was no mention of the Supreme Court ruling that has already limited the power of the courts to intervene, let alone any call for mass mobilization or strike action.

David Goldberg, president of the California Teachers Association, exemplifies the union bureaucracy's complicity by refusing to mobilize the 310,000 CTA members—many working under expired contracts—against the Trump administration's funding freeze. Instead of calling for collective action, Goldberg merely echoed empty appeals to Congress and pushed for more state funding, working to contain educators' anger and block any independent struggle, in line with the union bureaucracy's longstanding role as enforcers of austerity and defenders of the political establishment.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA) have responded to the Trump administration's illegal funding freeze with toothless statements and lawsuits, deliberately refusing to mobilize their millions of members in any real struggle. AFT President Randi Weingarten has appealed to

the Education Department, headed by billionaire wrestling executive Linda McMahon, to “do the right thing and release these critical resources now.”

Weingarten has a record of appeals to Trump and his officials, including publicly defending McMahon's support for apprenticeship and workforce initiatives that align with the administration's war and privatization agenda. Weingarten and the union apparatus have repeatedly promoted partnerships with business and defense interests, helping funnel students into the war economy, while working to contain educator opposition and block any independent fight against the bipartisan dismantling of public education.

Instead of organizing mass action, the national teacher unions have filed lawsuits and issued statements to channel outrage into safe legal avenues, covering up their own refusal to lead a genuine fight against the bipartisan assault on public education and complicity in Trump's policies. Their real fear is not Trump—it is the possibility that educators and workers will break free of their control and organize an independent movement in defense of public education and opposed to austerity, war and dictatorship.

This is exactly what is needed. This means mobilizing the full strength of educators, including nearly 80,000 educators in California whose contracts expired June 30, 15,000 in Philadelphia facing a contract battle later this summer and 27,000 in Chicago fighting school closures and mass layoffs after the sellout of their struggle by the Chicago Teachers Union earlier this year.

To do this, teachers and support staff must join and expand the network of Educators Rank-and-File Committees to take the conduct of this struggle out of the hands of the union bureaucracies and transfer power to educators, parents and young people in every school and neighborhood.

At the same time, educators must link up their struggles with striking Philadelphia city workers and other sections of workers to prepare collective action, including a general strike, to defend the right to public education and other essential social and democratic rights. The fight to defend public education will not be won through appeals or legal maneuvers, but through the conscious, organized action of educators and workers themselves.

To join the Educators Rank-and-File Committee, fill out the form below.



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