

# Trump's Mass Firings of Federal Workers Spread Chaos Nationwide

## Deep Dive

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- **Terminations rattle 2.2 million US government employees**
- **Fired workers report email glitches, locked offices**

The Energy Department fired a grants officer without giving his manager a heads up. The IRS tried to fire thousands of employees, but an email glitch kept many in the dark. The Environmental Protection Agency locked an attorney out of his office before he could pick up his law school diploma.

Terminated federal workers across the government describe a haphazard and disorganized effort to slash the size of the federal government.

That chaos is the result of President Donald Trump's disordered demand to cut as many as 200,000 recent hires at federal agencies. The mass firings have reached nearly 30,000 federal employees from coast to coast, according to an analysis of news reports by Bloomberg Law. The Office of Personnel Management, the federal government's HR division, declined to provide its own count on the record.

Those remaining wonder whether they're next.

Firing probationary workers—new hires—allows the Trump administration to cut workers who don't have the stronger job protections reserved for longer-serving employees.

"The intent of these terminations is not 'you're not a good fit' on an individual basis," said Michael Vogelsang, a federal-sector attorney at the Employment Law Group. "It is 'we need to cut heads,' and this is just the easiest way to do it."

The changes are rattling the more than 2 million civilians that work for the US government, the vast majority of whom live outside the DC region.

The Trump administration is expected to fire more workers in the coming days, after a D.C. federal judge on Feb. 20 declined unions' request to pause them.

"We're studying every agency and deciding who to let go and why, and we're doing so very rationally with a lot of support from analysis," said Kevin Hassett, Trump's economic adviser, during a Feb. 20 press briefing.

The White House didn't immediately respond to a request for further comment.

## Trump's Cuts to the Federal Workforce

At least 29,599 workers have been fired since January

<b>Agency Name</b>	<b>Reported Firings</b>
Agency for International Development	9,710
Internal Revenue Service	6,700
Agriculture	3,400
Health and Human Services	2,300
Interior	2,300
Veterans Affairs	1,000
NASA	1,000
Homeland Security	623
Commerce	500
Energy	500
Environmental Protection Agency	388
Office of Personnel Management	250
Transportation	200
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	170
National Science Foundation	168
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau	140
General Services Administration	100
Education	50

Source: Bloomberg Law, Bloomberg News, Reuters, congressional reports

Note: Figures are minimum number reported

Bloomberg Law

### **'Expendable'**

The firings swept through the Crescenz VA Medical Center in Philadelphia. The Department of Veterans Affairs dismissed Ben Andrew, a safety manager responsible for fire preparedness and preventing staff injuries. Andrew, a Navy veteran, learned he'd been fired from an email.

The Trump administration "didn't value the mission and just saw it as something that is very expendable," Andrew said.

Head Start program specialist Dayana Garcia had a similar experience in D.C. Head Start funds preschool options and medical services for low-income toddlers. Garcia began her career in early childhood education more than 20 years ago and spent 13 years supporting Head Start as a federal contractor. Her termination letter said her performance wasn't strong enough to "justify further employment at the agency."

"This is just outrageous that they would say I don't have the skills or the knowledge to manage this work," Garcia said by phone.

Fired federal employees across the government reported receiving a similar notice.

"Your ability, knowledge and skills do not fit the agency's current needs," the letter states.

### **Challenging Terminations**

Federal employees hired within the past year largely can't dispute their firing to the Merit Systems Protection Board, the panel that mediates disputes between agencies and their workers. Probationary employees can appeal if they think partisan politics fueled their termination, Vogelsang said.

Employees may also be able to challenge their firing through the Office of Special Counsel, the agency responsible for protecting whistleblowers, or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the board that enforces civil rights protections, federal-sector employment attorneys said.

Alden Law Group, together with the non-profit Democracy Forward, filed a class-wide complaint with OSC challenging the mass firings. They are representing people across nine federal agencies, according to a statement.

The Trump administration fired Hampton Dellinger, OSC's leader, on Feb. 7, even though his five-year term expires in 2029. Dellinger convinced a federal court to reinstate him while the litigation proceeds.

James & Hoffman, a DC labor law firm, is gathering termination details from hundreds of probationary employees that lost their job, with plans to bring their complaint to the MSPB.

The Trump administration undermined that panel when it fired former Chair Cathy Harris, a Democrat who immediately sued. A district judge reinstated her for the duration of the litigation. The case is pending in the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Federal worker unions have filed at least three lawsuits challenging firings, according to an analysis of Bloomberg Law data.

The American Federation of Government Employees, a union that represents 800,000 workers, is arguing in one lawsuit that OPM lacks the authority to fire thousands of probationary federal employees. The case is pending in the US District Court for the Northern District of California.

All of this will play out as the Trump administration fires more probationary workers. The day after the union filed the lawsuit, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency began firing its new employees. The OCC regulates banks.

“The civil service is going to outlast President Trump,” said John Mahoney, a federal-sector employment attorney who runs a D.C. firm. “It’s just a matter of enforcing your rights as a federal employee and defending your career, not just simply rolling over.”

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