

Image not found or type unknown

Trump Signs Executive Order to Dismantle Department of Education, Stirring Debate Across the Nation

Trump's order directs Education Secretary Linda McMahon to begin shutting down the agency, but critics argue Congress holds final authority. Opponents warn of disruptions to student loans and education funding, while lawsuits aim to block the move.

Federal / **Published On March 20, 2025 05:42 PM /**

Staff Consortium **March 20, 2025**

Image not found or type unknown



President Donald Trump, Education Secretary Linda McMahon, and students gathered in the Oval Office on Thursday.

Washington, D.C. — President Donald Trump on Thursday put pen to paper, signing an executive order that sets in motion a plan to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education.

The move, announced during a ceremony in the White House's East Room, fulfills a promise Trump has championed since his 2024 campaign, igniting a firestorm of reactions from supporters and critics alike. Flanked by students, educators, and Education Secretary Linda McMahon, Trump declared the decision a step toward handing education control back to the states, a vision he says will cut costs and boost classroom outcomes.

The executive order directs McMahon, the former wrestling executive confirmed as Education Secretary on March 3, to take "all necessary steps to facilitate the closure" of the department, an agency born in 1979 under President Jimmy Carter. Trump, who once called it "a big con job," argued that shuttering the department would free families and kids from a system he believes is letting them down. "Closing the Department of Education would provide children and their families the opportunity to escape a system that is failing them," he said, according to a White House statement posted on X, formerly Twitter, at 16:57 AST.

Locally, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. [agrees](#) with Trump's intent to fund state and territory Departments of Education directly. But the road to dismantling the department isn't a straight shot. Legal experts and lawmakers point out that only Congress can fully axe a Cabinet-level agency like this one, a process needing 60 votes in the Senate to beat a filibuster. With Democrats holding firm against the idea, the White House admits it doesn't have the numbers yet. Still, Trump's team isn't waiting around—they're slashing staff and budgets to shrink the department's reach, a tactic critics call a backdoor gutting. Earlier this month, on March 11, the department announced a 50% workforce cut, offering \$25,000 payouts to staffers who quit voluntarily, per Politico.

The Department of Education oversees a hefty \$1.6 trillion student loan portfolio, funds low-income schools through Pell Grants, and enforces civil rights in education. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters the same day that key pieces—like student loans and grants—will stick around, managed by a slimmed-down agency for now. Trump has floated shifting some duties to the Treasury Department, Commerce Department, or Small Business Administration, though details remain fuzzy. For student loan borrowers, the shake-up sparks worry. Betsy Mayotte, president of The Institute of Student Loan Advisors, told CNBC, "The anxiety levels are pretty high for borrowers right now." If the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program stalls, borrowers who've paid for years might hit a dead end, she warned.

Trump's order ties back to Project 2025, a 900-page playbook from the Heritage Foundation he once distanced himself from but now seems to echo. The plan pushes for state-led education and less federal oversight, a goal Trump's tapped McMahon to champion. She's promised to keep congressional funding for low-income districts flowing, despite the cuts. Meanwhile, a March 7 executive order already trimmed Public Service Loan Forgiveness, barring forgiveness for workers at groups Trump opposes, like those backing transgender rights or undocumented immigrants, Forbes reported.

The reaction's been swift and loud. Democratic lawmakers slammed the move as "reckless" and "unconstitutional," with the NAACP calling it a "dark day" for kids, accusing Trump of chipping away at democracy "one piece at a time." "The rule of law doesn't seem to matter to Trump," the group said in a statement. National Education Association President Becky Pringle warned Wednesday that axing the department would balloon class sizes, slash job training, hike college costs, and strip special education and civil rights protections. "It weakens public education, abandons civil rights enforcement and prioritizes corporate interests over the fundamental right to a quality education," Mitria Spotser of the Center for Responsible Lending told CNBC.

On the flip side, supporters cheered. Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt posted on X at 15:19 AST, “Today is a great day to dismantle the Department of Education.” Trump’s camp says the agency’s a money pit—claiming state control will halve costs and fix a system where only 24% of Americans like the education quality, down from 37% in 2017, per a January 2025 poll cited by Fox News.

Legal battles are brewing. Democratic state attorneys general filed a lawsuit on March 19, Reuters noted, aiming to block the order and halt the layoffs.

For students and parents, questions pile up. Will new loans or aid processing snag? How will repayment work if oversight shifts? Aaron Ament of the National Student Legal Defense Network told NBC Chicago on March 19, “The notion that the Department can be summarily closed or functionally decimated while maintaining ‘uninterrupted delivery of services, programs and benefits on which Americans rely’—as the order reportedly directs—is a pipe dream.” A March 13 rally outside the department’s D.C. headquarters, captured by The Guardian, showed the public’s split—some waving signs to save it, others ready to see it go.

No president’s ever killed off a Cabinet agency like this before, making Thursday’s signing a historic gamble. Trump held up the signed order at 16:39 AST, per ABC News, with McMahon by his side, as cameras clicked. Whether it’s a win for state power or a blow to federal support, the fight’s just starting—and Congress, courts, and the public will have their say. For now, the Department of Education’s fate hangs in the balance, its staff on leave starting Friday, and millions watching to see what comes next.