

Draft of Trump Executive Order Aims to Eliminate Education Department

Secretary Linda McMahon would be directed to ‘take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure’

By Matt Barnum, Ken Thomas and Tarini Parti
Wall Street Journal

President Trump is expected to issue an executive order as soon as Thursday aimed at abolishing the Education Department, according to people briefed on the matter.

A draft of the order, viewed by The Wall Street Journal, directs Education Secretary Linda McMahon to “take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure of the Education Department” based on “the maximum extent appropriate and permitted by law.”

The order has been in the works since Trump’s transition. In early February, the Journal reported that [administration officials](#) were considering such a move.

“The experiment of controlling American education through Federal programs and dollars—and the unaccountable bureaucrats those programs and dollars support—has failed our children, our teachers, and our families,” the draft order reads. The draft viewed by the Journal was labeled as “pre-decisional,” suggesting it could change.

The White House didn’t respond to a request for comment.

McMahon referred to the coming moves in an email to staff Monday night, soon after she was [confirmed by the Senate](#), saying she would “send education back to the states.” She said Trump and the American voters had “tasked us with accomplishing the elimination of the bureaucratic bloat here at the Education Department—a momentous final mission—quickly and responsibly.”

Fully unwinding the department would require a filibuster-proof, 60-vote majority in the Senate, legal experts have said. The major programs it administers—including money for students with disabilities and student loans—are codified in law and have significant political constituencies. The draft order doesn’t mention Congress.

“It’s hard to think of functions” of the department that aren’t statutorily required “in large part because most are, or are in service of those functions,” said Julia Martin, an education lawyer at the Bruman Group.

McMahon, during her confirmation hearing, said Trump wasn't intending to cut federal programs but to make them more efficient. She said Congress would need to go along with scrapping the department.

The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025, a conservative blueprint for a GOP administration, has laid out a detailed road map for closing the agency, which included placing the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights in the Justice Department and the student-loan portfolio in the Treasury Department. It calls for phasing out a longstanding funding stream for schools based on how many low-income students they serve.

The Trump administration has already taken a series of steps to weaken the agency. It laid off probationary employees and offered others buyouts. It paused some of its civil-rights enforcement work and canceled many grants and contracts related to research and teacher quality.

The administration has also used the agency's civil-rights arm to attempt to root out [antisemitism on university campuses](#), accommodations for [transgender students](#), and diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

Conservatives have been targeting the Education Department since it was established in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter and Congress. Their ire reached a fever pitch during the Biden administration over [student-loan forgiveness](#), the bungled [financial-aid form rollout](#) and the expansion of [antidiscrimination rules](#) to transgender students. Trump promised on the campaign trail to scrap the department.

With [around 4,500 employees](#) as of last year, the department is the smallest cabinet-level agency. Polls show [most Americans are skeptical](#) of eliminating the department, and Democrats have rallied in opposition to the idea.