

# Judge Extends Order Blocking Trump's Planned Mass Layoffs

*The ruling, which covers 22 agencies and also prohibits shutting down programs or offices, effectively pauses the president's plans for reshaping much of the government while the case plays out.*

**By Eileen Sullivan  
New York Times**

A judge handed workers across a broad swath of the federal government a reprieve on Thursday night, extending her pause on President Trump's plans for vast layoffs until a case challenging them is resolved.

The order, issued by Judge Susan Illston of the Federal District Court for the Northern District of California, affects tens of thousands of employees at 22 agencies, including the departments of Housing and Urban Development, State, Treasury and Veterans Affairs. She also ordered the administration not to shut down offices and programs in those agencies, or move them between agencies, as Trump officials have sometimes done in their efforts to dismantle parts of the government.

Workers at those agencies have been bracing for announcements of layoffs for weeks, expecting them to come any day. The planned reorganization is a major component of Mr. Trump's goal to reshape the federal government.

But Judge Illston said Mr. Trump was not following the laws set by Congress to address such reductions.

"Presidents may set policy priorities for the executive branch, and agency heads may implement them. This much is undisputed," the judge wrote in her order. "Agencies may not conduct large-scale reorganizations and reductions in force in blatant disregard of Congress's mandates, and a president may not initiate large-scale executive branch reorganization without partnering with Congress."

The reprieve is meant to freeze any cuts while Judge Illston fully hears the case and renders a final decision, but it could be much briefer. The administration has already [asked the Supreme Court](#) to block the two-week pause that Judge Illston initially issued this month. The court has yet to rule on the emergency application, and the government is expected to request that the justices overturn Judge Illston's new ruling as well.

The administration argued in its emergency application that Judge Illston's "far-reaching" pause would prevent "almost the entire executive branch from formulating

and implementing plans to reduce the size of the federal work force.” It called the idea that the president lacked the authority to direct executive agencies on downsizing plans an “extraordinary view.”

Still, among the raft of lawsuits challenging the cuts to the federal government’s work force and programs since Mr. Trump returned to the Oval Office, the one before Judge Illston could have the broadest effect in preventing more mass firings because it covers so many agencies.

The unions and organizations behind the lawsuit argue that the president is not following the process Congress established for the federal government to reorganize itself. They say he does not have the authority to make such decisions on his own.

“The recklessness of this administration is having real-world consequences for every American, in red states and blue states, in towns small and large,” said Skye Perryman, the president and chief executive of the legal group [Democracy Forward](#), which is a lead counsel for the plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

Judge Illston’s order also addresses the federal employees who have already been placed on administrative leave and eventually fired through the government’s layoff process, known as a reduction in force. The Department of Health and Human Services, for example, notified about 10,000 employees on April 1 that it was firing them. They have been on administrative leave since then. The department set June 2 as the date that many of the employees would stop getting paid and be officially separated from the government. Other employees faced a date in July.

To avoid the fire-rehire-refire saga that thousands of probationary employees have experienced since February as courts have ruled on their terminations, Judge Illston’s order calls for their reinstatement but also pauses that action, keeping them on paid administrative leave for the duration of the lawsuit.

“I’m concerned about the effect of all of this litigation on the lives of the people who are being affected and being hired and rehired and furloughed,” Judge Illston said on Thursday during a hearing in her San Francisco courtroom. “And I think we need to preserve as much order as we can for those for those people.”

*Abbie VanSickle contributed reporting.*