

Class Dismissed: The Plan to Eliminate the Department of Education

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Image from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/stude>

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What does the Department of Education Do?

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) is responsible for funding for the public K-12 schools, though they are not the main source of funding. This includes program for Title I (schools with high population of low-income students) and IDEA (helps schools pay for special education services for student with disabilities). Other than providing funding, the ED is mostly involved in higher education. They oversee student loans, the Federal Application for Free Student Aid (FAFSA), and Pell Grants. They are also responsible for civil rights law such as Title IX, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The department investigates claims and determines if the school has violated any laws. They also are involved in educational research on student performance, well-being, demographics and other student information that helps researchers understand the current state of education (Education Week).



Image from <https://www.facebook.com/ED.gov/>

What's the Plan?

As Insider Higher Ed discusses the re-elected Trump administration wants to eliminate the U.S. Department of Education. While this isn't a new idea, and there have been campaigns on killing the department since its creation in 1979, the call for elimination it has increased and intensified in recent years. Upcoming President Elect Trump along with others say that the ED has grown "too big and interferes in matters best left to local and state authorities." This new push is heavily influenced by the Biden Administrations attempt to forgive student loan's and the recent overhaul of Title IX. Project 2025 has been a driving force behind the plans on how to dismantle and eliminate the ED in detail. This includes moving the federal student loan programs to the Treasury Department. Critics argue that eliminating the ED would create large barriers for students and would most negatively impact them. This is especially true regarding federal financial aid. In addition, the plan would have the Department of Labor taking over responsibility of higher education, which in turn means the agency may choose to focus on

how colleges support the workforce versus their educational impacts. In good news, it is not easy to eliminate or abolish a federal department or agency. Chalkbeat discusses that in order to abolish the ED, there would have to be an act of Congress. It would also require broad bipartisan support, which this idea does not have. Representative Thomas Massie has regularly attempted to introduce legislation to abolish the department, but it has always failed to gain any traction. Additionally, the Supreme Court ruled in July to curb federal oversight of schools (USA Today), which in itself has lessened the degree to which the ED can intervene in certain situations. However, because of this ruling, it can also make it harder for the Trump administration to eliminate the department as they aren't able to make any dramatic changes via an executive order (Chalkbeat). Even though there is the positive aspect that making such a dramatic change in the U.S. would be an incredibly difficult one, it's still a conversation that we as citizens need to take seriously. Eliminating the department and moving it to join others can create major disruptions for students and schools. It also eliminates thousands of government jobs, losing staff and experts in the field, this can lead to chaos within the education field (Axios).

A Call to Action

While this plan will be difficult for the Trump administration to execute, it's not impossible. The Trump administration is still able to make changes within the department as well, which can be just as, if not more impactful than eliminating the department. There are a few things we can do to help the ED:

- Write a letter of support to your representatives:
 - Express your concerns
 - Show your support
 - Share success stories from your community because of the ED
- Mobilize support from your local school boards, educators, parents, etc.
 - The more people that are showing support the better
- Stay informed on the current talks regarding the ED
 - Do your research and keep up to date
- Support and advocate for any legislation that works to save or advance the ED
 - Join organizations lobbying for legislation
 - Support candidates who want to keep the ED
- Talk with friends and family about the:
 - Importance of the issue
 - Consequences if the ED were to be eliminated

Contact Information

To show your support of the Department of Education or to voice any concerns about the elimination of the Department of Education:

Congress Representatives

- <https://www.house.gov/representatives>
- <https://www.congress.gov/members>

U.S. Department of Education

- Call: 1-800-872-5327
- Address: 400 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, DC 20202

President Elect Donald Trump

- <https://www.45office.com/>



Image by Dani Foster via Canva

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