Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
1275 First Street NE, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20002
Tel: 202-408-1080
info@cbpp.org
www.cbpp.org

January 15, 2026 | **By Kiran Rachamallu and Devin O'Connor**

Administration's Radical Personnel Cuts Bypassed Congress and Lacked Transparency, Obscuring Impact on Public Services

Almost a year since the Trump Administration began rapidly and radically cutting the federal workforce without congressional approval, it has for the first time released data publicly showing the extent of the cuts to specific agencies to date. Across government, these massive, rushed declines in personnel have caused disruptions and slowdowns in public services ranging from repairing infrastructure damage from hurricanes to removing lead contamination from public schools to answering questions from Social Security beneficiaries.[1]

According to new data from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the number of federal civilian employees fell by some 220,000 between January and November 2025 through a combination of pressure campaigns, broadly offered departure incentives, and firings.[2] Department of Labor (DOL) data show that, by the end of 2025, federal civilian employment had fallen to the smallest share of the employed workforce on record in data going back to the 1930s.[3] The new OPM data broadly confirm the DOL figures and provide critical additional information showing *where* across government the reductions took place.

This severe retrenchment in federal capacity — generally unaccompanied by any clear plan on how to maintain the programs and services these workers administer and Congress continues to support — has been radical in both size and speed. Apart from the typical wind-down of temporary workers following each decennial census, the Administration has already carried out the largest one-year reduction in the federal workforce in over 75 years, dating back to the demobilization following World War II.[4] Agencies like the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Department of Education have already experienced their largest-ever annual decline, while the Department of Agriculture (USDA) experienced a larger decline in staffing in a matter of months than in any year since at least the 1970s.[5]

220,000
The cut in federal civilian employees between January and November 2025 due to pressure campaigns, departure incentives, and firings

The Administration has moved forward with this radical — and, in many instances, illegal — reshaping of the federal workforce while ignoring Congress and funding laws.[6] In March 2025, Congress passed, and the President signed, a funding package for fiscal year 2025 that largely continued the federal programs and services in place before President Trump took office and funded the federal personnel needed to carry them out.[7] Yet the Administration ignored these actions by Congress and began to effectuate massive staffing reductions. And its lack of transparency about where the reductions were occurring made it impossible during 2025 to assess how they were impacting agencies' ability to carry out the FY 2025 budget that Congress had enacted and the President had signed into law.

The President's 2026 budget, released in May, proposed shrinking the federal workforce on net by about 140,000 employees or roughly 6 percent. But the new OPM data show that Administration has already gone well beyond the personnel cuts reflected in that document, cutting federal personnel by nearly 10 percent by November 2025 — and it effectively implemented most of those cuts before the fiscal year started or Congress finalized the appropriations bills that fund federal personnel.

Indeed, until OPM released data in January 2026, the Administration had not made clear to Congress, auditors, and the public where these cuts had been taking place. Nor has the Administration yet sought community or stakeholder input on the impacts to services (see Appendix).

The new OPM data show not only that the Administration has cut more personnel overall than its 2026 budget plan had proposed (and before the 2026 appropriations bills were finalized), but that it has cut fewer in some agencies than proposed (at least so far) and significantly more in others. The Administration has also cut staffing levels in some agencies its budget did not target for any personnel reductions.

While kept in the dark on where the cuts were occurring, Congress has largely crafted 2026 funding bills that reject the major cuts the Administration proposed for 2026. For example, the President's budget proposed cutting National Park Service (NPS) funding by 37 percent in 2026, but Congress is currently considering a bipartisan funding bill that would provide only a 2 percent cut. Similarly, while the President's budget proposed cutting National Science Foundation (NSF) funding by 57 percent in 2026, Congress is considering a bipartisan funding bill that would provide only a 3 percent cut. At both the NPS and NSF, though, the Administration pursued sharp staffing reductions despite the absence of sharp funding cuts, resulting in NPS staffing down 9 percent and NSF staffing down 28 percent.

These massive cuts in staffing will have real consequences. If the Administration does not restore staffing to more sustainable levels, there will be a serious degradation in services and program performance; in some cases, agencies may be unable to carry out their requirements under law. And even if the Administration were to unexpectedly seek to restore staffing after Congress, on a bipartisan basis, finishes rejecting most of the Administration's proposed cuts to programs and services in 2026, it will have needlessly harmed these programs by unnecessarily driving away experienced staff and adding avoidable burdens associated with hiring and re-hiring large numbers of employees.

As it finalizes the remaining bills, Congress needs to include guardrails to ensure the Administration's personnel actions support, rather than frustrate, effective and reliable delivery of the programs and services that their constituents rely on and Congress has funded.[8] But even if Congress takes action to arrest *further* damage from the Administration's extreme personnel policies, the federal government will have to deal with the consequences from an unnecessary and unprecedented loss of skills and experience for years to come.

Administration Bypassed Congress to Radically Cut Staff Supporting Federal Programs and Services

The Trump Administration began implementing a series of unprecedented personnel cuts across federal agencies starting in January 2025 without asking for congressional approval or support.[9] It did so even though Congress provided resources that made such cuts unnecessary, funding staffing and administrative expenses at roughly the same levels in 2025 as in 2024.

In fact, the Administration redirected — in many cases likely unlawfully — funds that Congress had provided for fiscal year 2025 to support the administration, oversight, or delivery of federal programs and services and used them instead for incentives to encourage federal workers to resign.[10] At the same time, the Administration denigrated federal workers, accused them of criminal activity, locked them out of their duty stations, pressured them to engage in or condone illegal policies, and threatened them with reduced protections from politically motivated or arbitrary firings in the future.[11]

Ultimately, more than 150,000 federal employees reportedly accepted financial incentives to leave government in fiscal year 2025 through the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), a workforce reduction program created by the Administration without congressional authorization that provided workers with up to nearly eight months of paid leave if they agreed to resign.[12] Thousands more left federal service by accepting offers the Administration made through the Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP) or Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) programs, pre-existing authorities that allow federal agencies to offer eligible workers lump-sum monetary payments or more generous retirement benefits to leave the federal workforce when downsizing or restructuring is *necessary*.[13]

Alongside this campaign of pressured departures, the Administration engaged in mass firings — known as reductions in force (RIFs) — of 17,000 federal employees, while often failing to follow the required procedures and guardrails for such firings established in law.[14] The Administration also carried out a mass termination, without merit or cause, of at least 7,000 "probationary" employees, typically those who had been in new roles for less than two years; a federal judge later ruled that the terminations were illegal.[15] And it conducted other targeted terminations, such as firing 17 Senate-confirmed inspectors general in flagrant violation of lawful removal procedures.[16]

Taken together, these actions — alongside other forms of attrition and in the face of an extended hiring freeze across most of government[17]— were expected to drive the projected departure of 317,000 federal employees (roughly 50 percent more than the annual average number of separations during President

Trump's first term) and reduce the federal workforce by about 249,000 employees overall after accounting for new hires by year's end, OPM Director Kupor announced in November.[18]

These cuts have already begun to affect public services in a range of areas, and the harm is likely to grow over time. A few of the impacts reported to date include:

- **Public health.** Programs tracking youth smoking, job-related injuries, lead poisonings, and pregnancies have been cancelled as a result of cuts to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) staff. Additionally, CDC denied assistance to a school dealing with lead contamination because CDC had laid off the team responsible for responding to such incidents.[19] CDC employment was cut by 21 percent between January and November.
- **Disaster response.** Workforce reductions at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other federal agencies, including the loss of experienced leaders, are exacerbating existing challenges and reducing the effectiveness of federal disaster response, a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found.[20] FEMA staffing was cut by 14 percent by November.
- **Weather forecasting.** Due to staffing reductions at the National Weather Service (NWS), offices have reportedly struggled to provide 24/7 staffing and regular monitoring of atmospheric conditions, harming forecast accuracy and their ability to issue needed warnings.[21] The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which hosts the NWS, suffered a 19 percent cut in staffing by November.
- **Farm assistance.** Cuts at USDA's Farm Service Agency have led to delays in payments and eligibility processing for farm loans, disaster assistance, and commodity programs.[22] Farm Service Agency staffing was cut by almost 22 percent by November.
- **Student loans.** The Department of Education unit within the Federal Student Aid office responsible for fielding grievances about student loans reported a backlog of more than 27,000 complaints after losing nearly two-thirds of its staff.[23] Meanwhile, overall staffing at the Federal Student Aid office was cut by over 45 percent by November.
- **Public lands.** An internal report found that trails maintained by the Forest Service nationwide are deteriorating rapidly due to staff departures, threatening visitor safety and harming customer service.[24] Forest Service staffing fell by roughly 9 percent between September 2024 and September 2025. Similarly, the National Park Service, which had a workforce roughly 12 percent smaller in September 2025 than a year earlier, reported that at least 20 percent of its parks have been understaffed, leading to cancelled programs, maintenance delays, and cuts to emergency response programs.[25]

Cuts Have Already Far Exceeded Those in President's Budget

An Administration seeking to greatly reduce the federal workforce can do so by publicly laying out its preferred personnel policies in its budget proposal to Congress and then moving forward with reductions where and when they align with the funding Congress provides. The Trump Administration didn't follow this path, but instead moved forward with radical cuts without waiting for, or securing, congressional action. Thus, the President's 2026 budget proposal is useful for illustrating not just the extreme staffing cuts it favors but also how far it has already gone toward exceeding them *without* congressional approval.

The Administration's FY 2026 budget plan proposed reducing staffing by about 140,000 employees from 2024 levels overall, with cuts greater than 10 percent at eight cabinet agencies. The OPM data released in January show that, by November 2025, the Administration had far exceeded those proposed-but-not-approved targets, cutting roughly 220,000 positions since the start of the year and cutting nine agencies by more than 10 percent. (See Table 1.)[26]

TABLE 1

Personnel Cuts in 2025 Far Exceeded Administration's *Proposal* to Congress at Many Agencies

Percent change in federal civilian personnel

Agency	Proposed Change in the President's FY 2026 Budget (Relative to FY 2024)	Actual Reduction Reported by Office of Personnel Management (Jan – Nov 2025)
Agriculture	-23%	-18%
Commerce	1%	-14%
Defense	-4%	-8%
Education	-46%	-39%
Energy	-9%	-15%
Health and Human Services	-17%	-18%
Homeland Security	2%	-2%
Housing and Urban Development	-27%	-23%
Interior	-15%	-8%
Justice	-5%	-8%
Labor	-18%	-12%
State and Other Int'l Programs	-15%	-37%
Transportation	2%	-7%
Treasury	-16%	-21%
Veterans Affairs	-1%	-6%
EPA	-11%	-12%
NASA	-31%	-6%
Social Security	-13%	-11%
Other Independent Agencies	-12%	-19%
Total	-6%	-10%

Note: Total excludes Postal Service employees. These numbers do not include independent contractors or other contractor employees.

Source: CBPP analysis of FY 2026 President's budget appendix and OPM EHRI Status and Dynamics data published in January 2026. Data from the President's budget are for full-time equivalents (FTEs) and data from OPM are "headcounts."

The Administration appears to have already exceeded its public goals in some agencies, such as Defense (data are for civilian workforce only), Health and Human Services, Justice, State, Treasury, Veterans Affairs (VA), and EPA. In other agencies, such as Agriculture, Education, HUD, Labor, and SSA, it appears to have gone most of the way to achieving the proposed reductions. And agencies like Commerce and Transportation saw significant losses even though the President's proposed budget called for no staffing reductions.

Even within some departments that have been spared large overall cuts, particular agencies or offices within those departments may have seen large reductions. For example, though the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) showed only a 2 percent decrease in staff, FEMA within DHS lost 14 percent of its workforce by November 2025.

It bears repeating that this mass reduction in personnel occurred without congressional approval. Moreover, until January 2026, there was no official public accounting of where the personnel cuts had been implemented — information necessary for Congress to conduct oversight and determine whether the funding Congress had provided for personnel was being misused by the Administration.

The experience at the VA shows that the Administration's public-facing statements about personnel and the actions it has taken are sometimes sharply at odds, meaning Congress and the public have had even less visibility into Administration actions. Early on, the Administration reportedly developed plans to slash up to 80,000 VA employees, but the President's budget request for VA, put out in May 2025, proposed a reduction of only about 4,500.[27] Once the budget plan came out, policymakers and the public may have thought the Administration no longer was targeting the VA for large personnel cuts — but that assumption would have been incorrect. The VA announced in July that it expected to cut 30,000 workers in 2025 through departure incentives, attrition, and hiring caps rather than mass layoffs.[28] The OPM data release in January confirms that VA lost nearly 28,000 employees due to buy-outs and attrition between January and November, and recent reporting suggests the Administration has no plans to fill most of the empty roles.[29]

An executive order issued in October required agencies to begin submitting annual staffing plans to the Office of Management and Budget and OPM by the end of 2025, along with quarterly updates.[30] This suggests that more personnel changes could soon be coming, though these plans have not been made public and it is unclear if they ever will be.

Congress Should Address Staffing Cuts in 2026 Funding Bills

The Administration has attempted to present Congress with a fait accompli by rapidly driving hundreds of thousands of federal workers out of their jobs. It has done so, in part, by using funds that Congress had provided to pay workers to administer programs and deliver services to instead finance incentives that encouraged their departure and to provide long periods of administrative leave that meant taxpayers paid for workers to not work. Remaining workers are overburdened, dealing with a greatly expanded workload compounded by the enormous loss of their former colleagues' experience, leadership, and skills. The result will be degraded federal programs at greater risk for fraud or failure for years to come.[31]

Now Congress must decide how it will respond to ensure that the federal government can reliably deliver public services – from health care for veterans and responding to disease outbreaks to helping Social Security applicants and beneficiaries when issues arise to helping communities respond to and recover from hurricanes, floods, and wildfires.

Congress took a first step to reassert its role in shaping the federal workforce by attempting to prevent further mass layoffs through RIFs. By including clear language prohibiting RIFs in the continuing resolution (CR) signed into law in November, Congress ensured that at least one tool the Administration has abused to undermine the operation of the federal government and public services is not available.[32] Congress also reversed the unnecessary, unwarranted, and politically motivated mass firing of roughly 4,000 federal employees during the shutdown.[33] While the prohibition on the Administration engaging in further RIFs is temporary – tied to the length of the CR – Congress can and should extend it.

Congress also took action to try to limit future cuts at VA when it passed full-year funding for the agency – directing the Administration to maintain staffing levels needed to meet the department's established service performance goal metrics. Congress is considering similar measures in some of the full-year funding bills it is currently debating, such as requiring the National Weather Service to maintain staffing at levels necessary to "to protect life and property to the maximum extent possible."

As Congress continues to negotiate full-year funding legislation, it will need to crack down on the Administration's abuse and weaponization of personnel policy, prevent further attacks on the non-partisan nature of the civil service, and address the Administration's unilateral cuts in federal capacity, which will otherwise hobble the delivery of services and programs that Congress chooses to fund.

Appendix: Throughout 2025, Administration Failed to Show Where Personnel Cuts Occurred

The federal data released in January 2026 show that the Trump Administration's radical personnel cuts far exceeded those proposed in its budget and were not evenly distributed across government. Until this release, the Administration had provided few details about its actions over the past year, while the standard public release schedule for detailed federal personnel data was too slow to make them helpful in a period of unprecedented rapid change.[34]

The absence of updated data made it impossible for Congress and the public to obtain a comprehensive, up-to-date picture by agency or program of where the cuts had occurred and in what numbers. Instead, over the past year they had to rely on information cobbled together from press releases, lawsuit-compelled disclosures, and media stories, which were often partial or outdated.[35] While some government auditors, such as GAO, the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, and the USDA Office of Inspector General, released reports detailing staff reductions, these covered only a few agencies.[36]

In the absence of federal data releases, the most comprehensive public information was collected by the Partnership for Public Service, a non-partisan organization focused on improving the public sector, which tracked news and government reports of personnel reductions since the start of the Trump Administration. While it was by far the best available source on departures by agency, the effort was necessarily limited by the lack of official data and likely only accounted for approximately two-thirds of the employees who the Administration announced left government in 2025.[37]

The release in September 2025 of updated plans for agency operations in the event of a government shutdown (known as "lapse plans") provided an unexpected update on some department-level staffing levels from the departments themselves. The plans indicated reductions of roughly 100,000 federal employees *on net* since the end of the previous fiscal year. However, only three agencies made clear that their staffing levels accounted for the impact of the Deferred Resignation Program. Thus, it was unclear whether other agencies included employees who had long been on administrative leave but were not scheduled to officially separate until the fiscal year ended on September 30, which would have overstated their staffing levels.[38]

In short, by the end of 2025 there was still no way to fully identify where within government all of the massive reductions occurred.

Along with its January 2026 data release, OPM also signaled that it will begin providing more timely reporting going forward.[39]

Technical Note

With the January 2026 release of federal personnel data through November 2025, this report compares the updated picture of the Administration's personnel actions on an agency-by-agency basis with proposals for staffing level changes included in the President's 2026 budget for each budget account to evaluate how changes have mirrored the Administration's public proposals.

Since these data sources use slightly different ways of measuring federal personnel, some adjustments were made so the results would be more easily comparable, such as backing out the staffing consequences of proposals in the President's budget to transfer activities between agencies. (The budget proposed, for example, to move the Bureau of Labor Statistics from the Department of Labor to the Department of Commerce and to move wildfire management from Agriculture to Interior).

The personnel levels reported in the President's budget, detailed by agency in the appendix that accompanies the budget, are full-time equivalents (FTEs). By comparison, changes in personnel levels reflected in the newly released OPM data reflect "headcounts" — the total number of employees affected, regardless of whether full- or part-time. Headcount figures tend to be slightly higher than FTEs (which would reflect two half-time employees as one FTE, for example). Generally, however, *percentage* changes in FTEs and headcounts are likely to track one another.

Additionally, the data sources use slightly different start and end dates. The President's 2026 budget shows the change between the FTE levels at the end of fiscal year 2024 and the Administration's proposed FTE levels for fiscal year 2026, while the OPM data show the net change in personnel levels from January 2025 to November 2025.

---

[1] Government Accountability Office (GAO), "Disaster Assistance High-Risk Series: Federal Response Workforce Readiness," September 2, 2025, https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-25-108598; Bloomberg Law, "How DOGE Cuts May Hit Worker Safety, Pay Laws: The Brief," April 2, 2025, https://news.bloomberglaw.com/business-and-practice/how-doge-cuts-hit-us-workers; Meg Tirrell and Brenda Goodman, "CDC Denies Milwaukee's request for help with unsafe lead levels in public schools," CNN, April 11, 2025, https://www.cnn.com/2025/04/11/health/cdc-milwaukee-schools-lead/; Lisa Rein, Meryl Kornfield, and Hannah Natanson, "How Social Security has gotten worse under Trump," Washington Post, December 30, 2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/12/29/trump-social-security-cuts-customer-service/; Matthew Perronne, "FDA moves to rehire medical device, food safety and other staffers fired days earlier," AP, February 24, 2025, https://apnews.com/article/fda-layoffs-trump-doge-rehired-medical-devices-85d4743e4ce88dbe3b99c813bad4b702.

[2] Office of Personnel Management (OPM), "How has the size of the federal workforce changed over time?" https://data.opm.gov/explore-data/analytics/workforce-changes. On January 8, OPM released monthly EHRI Status and Dynamics data on the federal workforce through November 2025. Previously, only data through March 2025 had been made public. OPM announced that it will make updated data available monthly going forward (i.e., December 2025 data is expected to be available in February 2026).

[3] In December 2025, the seasonally adjusted estimate of the number of federal employees except U.S. Postal Service made up 1.34 percent of total nonfarm employees. Over the past 30 years, the average monthly level was 1.53 percent, with the previous low at 1.40 percent in November 2000. The lowest monthly level in the first Trump

Administration was 1.47 percent. See U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “All Employees, Federal, Except U.S. Postal Service” (https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CES9091100001) and “All Employees, Total Nonfarm” (https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/PAYEMS), retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, December 16, 2025.

[4] Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Employment, Hours, and Earnings from the Current Employment Statistics survey (National),” December 22, 2025, https://data.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/CES9091000001;jsessionid=572B0C7C743C96F701DA7B05585B38C9.

[5] Kathleen Romig and Devin O’Connor, “Reassignment Won’t Fix the Largest-Ever Social Security Staffing Cut,” CBPP, June 23, 2025, https://www.cbpp.org/research/social-security/reassignment-wont-fix-the-largest-ever-social-security-staffing-cut; White House, “President’s Budget Historical Tables,” https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/information-resources/budget/historical-tables/ ; William Morton, “Social Security Administration (SSA) Staffing Levels: Data Brief,” Congressional Research Service, September 29, 2025, https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48725; Government Accountability Office (GAO), “Department of Education Staffing Levels Have Generally Decreased Over Time, while Contracting Levels Have Remained Relatively Stable,” June 12, 2017, https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-17-669r.pdf.

[6] Sam Berger and Jacob Leibenluft, “Trump Administration’s Mass Layoffs of Federal Workers Are Illegal,” CBPP, May 2, 2025, https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/trump-administrations-mass-layoffs-of-federal-workers-are-illegal.

[7] Congress.gov, “Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025” (P.L. 119-4), https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1968.

[8] Brendan Duke *et al.,* “2026 Appropriations Must Protect Against Further Partisan Cuts and Illegal Withholding of Funds,” CBPP, September 4, 2025, https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/2026-appropriations-must-protect-against-further-partisan-cuts-and-illegal.

[9] Office of Personnel Management, “Deferred Resignation Email to Federal Employees,” January 28, 2025, https://www.opm.gov/about-us/fork/original-email-to-employees/.

[10] CourtListener, “Amended Complaint,” *American Federation of Government Employees, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, and National Association of Government Employees, Inc. v. Charles Ezell and Office of Personnel Management,* Case No. 1:25-cv-10276, March 31, 2025, https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.mad.280398/gov.uscourts.mad.280398.77.0.pdf.

[11] Aaron Pellish, ”Social Security data chief resigns after whistleblower complaint over DOGE data access,” Politico, updated September 2, 2025, https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/29/social-security-data-chief-resigns-00537974; Jeff Stein *et al.,* ”Senior U.S. official exits after rift with Musk allies over payment system,” Washington Post, January 31, 2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/01/31/elon-musk-treasury-department-payment-systems/; Eric Katz and Erich Wagner, “Final Schedule F regulations to describe civil service protections as ‘unconstitutional overcorrections,’” Government Executive, November 18, 2025, https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/11/final-schedule-f-regulations-describe-civil-service-protections-unconstitutional-overcorrections/409616/; Personnel Management Office, “Improving Performance, Accountability, and Responsiveness in the Civil Service,” April 23, 2025, https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/04/23/2025-06904/improving-performance-accountability-and-responsiveness-in-the-civil-service.

[12] Meryl Kornfield, Hannah Natanson, and Laura Meckler, ”The federal government is paying more than 154,000 people not to work,” Washington Post, July 31, 2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/07/31/federal-workers-doge-buyout-paid/; Office of Personnel Management, ”Guidance Regarding Deferred Resignation Program,” January 28, 2025,

https://www.opm.gov/media/3oaf3vs0/opm-guidance-memo-re-deferred-resignation-program-01-28-25-final.pdf.

[13] Jory Heckman, "Over 11,000 VA health care employees apply to leave, but 'very few' eligible for separation incentives," Federal News Network, May 8, 2025, https://federalnewsnetwork.com/hiring-retention/2025/05/over-11000-va-health-care-employees-apply-to-leave-but-very-few-eligible-for-separation-incentives/; Alessandra Malito, "Here's how many Social Security workers are taking a buyout - so far," Morningstar, March 18, 2025, https://www.morningstar.com/news/marketwatch/2025031866/heres-how-many-social-security-workers-are-taking-a-buyout-so-far; OPM, "Volunteer Separation Incentive Payments" (https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/voluntary-separation-incentive-payments/) and "Volunteer Early Retirement Authority" (https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/voluntary-early-retirement-authority/).

[14] Greg Korte, "Federal workforce's toll after a year of DOGE and Trump: 317,000," Bloomberg, December 10, 2025, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-12-10/federal-workforce-s-toll-after-a-year-of-doge-and-trump-317-000.

[15] Eileen Sullivan, "Mass Firing of Probationary Federal Employees Was Illegal, Judge Rules," New York Times, September 13, 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/13/us/politics/probationary-employees-firing-illegal.html.

[16] Eric Katz, "Trump's mass probationary firings were illegal, judge concludes, but he won't order re-hirings," Government Executive, September 15, 2025, https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/09/trumps-mass-probationary-firings-were-illegal-judge-concludes-he-wont-order-re-hirings/408111/; Cristin Dorgelo *et al.,* "Trump Administration's Undercutting of Oversight Hurts Taxpayers and Beneficiaries," CBPP, November 6, 2025, https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/trump-administrations-undercutting-of-oversight-hurts-taxpayers-and.

[17] Office of Management and Budget, "Federal Civilian Hiring Freeze Guidance," January 20, 2025, https://www.opm.gov/media/zkebfxow/omb-opm-federal-civilian-hiring-freeze-guidance-1-20-2025-final.pdf.

[18] Scott Kupor, "Everyone Has a Plan – Until You Step Into the Ring," OPM, November 21, 2025, https://www.opm.gov/news/secrets-of-opm/everyone-has-a-plan-until-you-step-into-the-ring/. OPM indicated that roughly 317,000 employees left and 68,000 were hired. Executive Order 14210, issued in February 2025, set a target of hiring no more than one new worker for every four workers who leave.

[19] Mike Stobbie, "Cuts have eliminated more than a dozen US government health-tracking programs," AP, May 4, 2025, https://apnews.com/article/cdc-disease-tracking-health-surveillance-554eb9aa20b758714eba8b835dcde856; Tirrell and Goodman.

[20] GAO, "Disaster Assistance High-Risk Series: Federal Response Workforce Readiness."

[21] Andrew Freedman, "Trump admin is 'trying to put out a fire they started' at Weather Service as a cold, snowy winter looms," CNN, December 9, 2025, https://www.cnn.com/2025/12/09/weather/national-weather-service-hiring-gaps-winter-weather-storms-trump.

[22] National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, "USDA Staffing Crisis: A Year of Losses and the Road Ahead," December 17, 2025, https://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/usda-staffing-crisis-a-year-of-losses-and-the-road-ahead/.

[23] Tyler Kingkade, "Education Department has a backlog of 27,000 complaints about student loans," NBC News, August 7, 2025, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/education/education-department-backlog-student-loan-complaints-rcna223508.

[24] Hannah Natanson, "Internal Forest Service report finds 'unpassable trails, unsafe bridges,'" Washington Post, updated December 16, 2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/12/16/forest-service-trail-maintenance-crisis.

[25] National Parks Conservation Association, "Staffing Crisis at National Parks Reaches Breaking Point, New Data Shows 24% Decline in Permanent Workforce," July 3, 2025, https://www.npca.org/articles/9551-staffing-crisis-at-national-parks-reaches-breaking-point-new-data-shows-24; Eileen Sullivan, "Trump Shrank Staffing of National Parks. See How Many Are Struggling," New York Times, August 27, 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/27/us/politics/trump-cuts-national-parks.html. The staffing figures in this bullet are shown year over year because of the seasonal hiring nature of these agencies.

[26] While technical differences in personnel measures might explain a small share of this discrepancy, they are unlikely to account for much of the gap. (See Technical Note.)

[27] Stephen Groves, "Trump administration plans to cut 80,000 employees from Veterans Affairs, according to internal memo," AP, updated March 5, 2025, https://apnews.com/article/veterans-affairs-cuts-doge-musk-trump-f587a6bc3db6a460e9c357592e165712.

[28] Department of Veterans Affairs, "VA to reduce staff by nearly 30K by end of FY2025," July 7, 2025, https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-to-reduce-staff-by-nearly-30k-by-end-of-fy2025/.

[29] Meryl Kornfield, Hannah Natanson, and Lisa Rein, "VA plans to abruptly eliminate tens of thousands of health care jobs," Washington Post, updated December 13, 2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/12/13/va-veterans-affairs-job-cuts-trump/.

[30] White House, "Ensuring Continued Accountability in Federal Hiring," October 15, 2025, https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/10/ensuring-continued-accountability-in-federal-hiring/.

[31] Tim Reid *et al.,* "US government faces brain drain as 154,000 federal workers exit this week," Reuters, September 7, 2025, https://www.reuters.com/legal/litigation/us-government-faces-brain-drain-154000-federal-workers-exit-this-week-2025-09-30/.

[32] Congress.gov, "H.R.5371 - Continuing Appropriations, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Extensions Act, 2026," https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/5371/text.

[33] CourtListener, "Supplemental Declaration of Stephen Billy," *American Federation of Government Employees,, AFL-CIO, et al., v. United States Office of Management and Budget, et al.,* Case No. 3:25-cv-08302-SI, October 14, 2025, https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.cand.457131/gov.uscourts.cand.457131.49.2.pdf.

[34] As of December 2025, the most recent data made available by the Administration through the OPM FedScope dataset (which comprehensively shows changes at an agency and sub-agency level) only covered changes in personnel levels through March 2025 and did not distinguish between current employees and the tens of thousands of workers who had already been placed on paid administrative leave prior to departure. Ironically, the Administration eliminated the office that oversaw these federal data through threatened layoffs earlier in 2025, creating some concern about the timeliness and quality of future releases. See Elizabeth Byers and Brandon Lardy, "Latest FedScope data offers a glimpse into federal workforce changes under DOGE and raises transparency concerns," Partnership for Public Service, July 10, 2025, https://ourpublicservice.org/blog/new-fedscope-data-2025-opm-federal-workforce-changes-doge-trump-administration/; Ronnie Dungan, "'Flying blind': DOGE axes gov HR data team covering 2 million federal workers," HR Grapevine, April 16, 2025, https://www.hrgrapevine.com/us/content/article/2025-04-16-federal-hr-data-team-axed-amid-sweeping-job-cuts.

[35] For details, see the Methodology section of the Partnership for Public Service's "Federal Harms Tracker." Partnership for Public Service, "Federal Harms Tracker: The Cost to Your Government," https://ourpublicservice.org/federal-harms-tracker/cost-to-your-government.

[36] Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, "Snapshot Report: IRS Workforce Reductions as of May 2025," July 18, 2025, https://www.tigta.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2025-08/2025ier027fr.pdf and USDA Office of Inspector General, "U.S. Department of Agriculture Staffing Levels," December 17, 2025, https://usdaoig.oversight.gov/reports/other/us-department-agriculture-staffing-levels.

[37] Partnership for Public Service. Because the tracking could not account for new hires by agency, the Partnership for Public Service's "Federal Harms Tracker" does not provide an estimate of net losses. Thus, the tracker's figure of 212,000 total planned departures through December 16, 2025 is best considered in relation to the 317,000 total separations announced by OPM Director Kupor as projected through December 2025, rather than the 249,000 *net* reduction. Similarly, the tracker does not account for subsequent changes in policy, reinstatements, or judicial reversals that may occur after departures are reported or announced, so it slightly overstates departures in some instances. It also necessarily faces a limitation in not being able to account for separations (whether voluntary or involuntary) that are *not* reported or announced.

[38] Stephanie Wright, "Here's a look at federal agencies' shutdown contingency plans," Federal News Network, September 30, 2025, https://federalnewsnetwork.com/government-shutdown/2025/09/heres-a-look-at-federal-agencies-contingency-plans-as-shutdown-looms/.

[39] OPM, "Release Notes," January 8, 2026, https://data.opm.gov/info-and-help/release-notes.