September 15, 2026

The Honorable Mark Priebe
Acting Inspector General
Office of Inspector General
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Acting Inspector General Priebe:

We write as concerned individuals with significant experience and expertise in the leadership, management, and operation of the Department of Education to ask you to investigate the cost and impact of the firing of more than 70 probationary employees, issuing Reduction in Force (RIF) notices to more than 1,400 employees in March 2025, and an additional 465 employees in October 2025, as well as the subsequent reinstatements and rehiring of hundreds of employees.

Identity and Interests of the Submitters (see Appendix A for more information)

- Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, 2009-2015
- John B. King Jr., U.S. Secretary of Education, 2016-2017
- Miguel Cardona, U.S. Secretary of Education, 2021-2025
- Rachel Gittleman, President, American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Local 252

I. Background

Initial Actions to Shutter Agency

The Department of Education (ED) was the smallest cabinet level agency even before the unlawful and continuous dismantling conducted by this Administration, with only 4,133 employees as of January 20, 2026.[1] Shuttering the Department has long been a goal of this Administration,[2] and on February 28, 2025, the Cato Institute published a report titled "A Quick Cutter's Guide to the US Department of Education," which laid out a detailed plan of how to eliminate the Department of Education.[3] During now-Secretary McMahon's confirmation process, she stated that she "wholeheartedly" agreed with the President's plan to shutter the Department,[4] and on her first day in the role, she sent an all staff email

[1] U.S. Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force,* https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force (March 11, 2025). Hereinafter *ED Initiates RIF* (March 2025).
[2] Time Magazine, Richard Stengel, *A Brief History of Efforts to End the Department of Education,* https://time.com/7225339/history-efforts-end-department-of-education/ (Feb. 15, 2025).
[3] Cato Institute, *A Quick Cutter's Guide to the US Department of Education,* https://www.cato.org/blog/quick-cutters-guide-us-department-education (Feb. 28, 2025).
[4] The Hill, Lexi Lonas Cochran, *McMahon says she 'wholeheartedly' agrees with Trump plan to abolish Education Department,* https://thehill.com/homenews/education/5162816-mcmahon-abolish-education-department-trump/ (Feb. 25, 2025).

with the subject line: "Our Department's Final Mission."[5] Since day one, the Secretary and this Administration have been clear of their intention to violate the law, Congressional intent, and the constitution, regardless of the cost.

In January 2025, Acting Secretary Denise Carter mandated that all staff return to the office, provided a June 2025 date for forced relocation of staff outside of a 50-mile radius of regional offices, and revoked many existing reasonable accommodations for remote work. These massive shifts to working conditions came without required notice to the Union nor the opportunity to bargain, and the policies were introduced to staff without adequate information, timelines, or notice.

On January 23, 2025, the Department announced that it would "take actions to eliminate DEI," and promptly placed at least 75 Bargaining Unit Employees (BUEs) employees, and many more non-BUE employees on Administrative Leave for leave pursuant to "the executive order on DEIA and/or further related guidance from OPM."[6] These employees remained on Administrative Leave until August 2025.

On January 28, 2025, the Administration sent all ED staff an email encouraging them to take the "Fork in the Road," or a deferred resignation program. Staff was given limited information, no space or process to have questions answered, and were repeatedly reminded of the "Fork in the Road" opportunity until the date of February 6, 2026.[7] Then, on February 28, 2026, the Agency announced an additional program to force staff out of jobs– an offer "of $25,000 to resign or retire, or take severance" (with many unfavorable conditions like needing to repay the payment should they return to the federal government) through the Voluntary Separation Incentive Programs (VSIP).[8] Ultimately, 259 (total BUE and non-BUE) employees accepted the deferred resignation offer, and 319 more left through the VSIP.[9]

Rumors of mass firings swirled throughout February,[10] and then in early February, the Agency fired more than 70 employees, many of whom were later reinstated when the Agency determined that it had incorrectly determined their probationary status.[11]

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[5] Department of Education, *Secretary McMahon: Our Department's Final Mission*, https://www.ed.gov/about/news/speech/secretary-mcmahon-our-departments-final-mission (March 3, 2025).
[6] *See* Oregon Public Broadcasting, Tiffany Camhi, *Dizzying changes: 20 shifts to education in the Trump administration's first month,* https://www.opb.org/article/2025/02/20/20-shifts-education-trump-administration-government-programs-northwest/ (Feb. 20, 2025).
See also Management's Response to Union's Request for Information re: Executive Order 14151, Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yxCbZ9kceiyLrVSJRxO3HauNgjVwC3I2/view?usp=sharing (March 6, 2025).
[7] Office of Personnel Management, *Original Email to Employees*: *Deferred Resignation Email to Federal Employees,* https://www.opm.gov/fork/original-email-to-employees/ (Jan. 28, 2025). Hereinafter *Deferred Resignation Email* (Jan 2025).
[8] EdSource, *Department of Education offers buyouts that some call 'misleading,'* https://edsource.org/updates/department-of-education-offers-buyouts-that-some-call-misleading (Feb. 28, 2025).
[9] *ED Initiates RIF* (March 2025).
[10] The Hill, Lexi Lonas Cochran, *Department of Education could be next on Trump's chopping block*, https://thehill.com/homenews/education/5126065-department-of-education-trump-musk-doge-doe-usaid/, (Feb. 4, 2025).
See also The New York Times, Zach Montague, *Education Dept. Workers Offered Buyouts Ahead of 'Very Significant' Layoffs,* https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/28/us/politics/education-department-buyout-email.html (Feb. 25, 2025).
[11] Office of Personnel Management, Voluntary Seperation Incentives Payments, https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/voluntary-separation-incentive-payments/ (Last accessed Sept. 8, 2026).

Alongside the mass firings, the Administration cancelled many of the programs and services that staff are responsible for administering. As an example, the Department cancelled $900 million in contracts on February 10, 2025,[12] and another $350 million on February 27, 2025[13] (the same day that the Department removed the student loan repayment applications from the website).[14]

March 2025 RIF Order

On March 3, 2025, Linda McMahon was confirmed and sworn in as the Secretary of Education. Later that day, the Secretary sent an email to all ED staff with the subject "Our Department's Final Mission," outlining her ultimate goal to shutter the Department.

On March 11, 2026, the Agency issued Reduction in Force (RIF) notices to nearly 1,400 employees.[15] RIFed staff were placed on Administrative Leave beginning on March 21, 2025, but many lost access to email and systems immediately, or even before they received the RIF notice, which made offboarding incredibly difficult. On or around April 10, 2025, these staff received Official RIF Notices which stated "Effective June 10, 2025, ED will conduct a RIF within your competitive area. This action is a result of the abolishment of your position in [POC and Division]." Some staff never received Official RIF Notices, many of the RIF notices were rife with errors, and other staff received notices at later dates.

Litigation Begins

On March 13, 2026, a coalition of 21 Attorneys General sued the Secretary for the unlawful and unconstitutional RIF and the ongoing dismantling of a Congressionally created agency.[16] On May 22, 2026, Judge Myong J. Joun of the District Court of Massachusetts granted a preliminary injunction in *New York vs. McMahon,* pausing the firings. The Administration appealed the decision later that day, and on June 5, 2026, the Administration submitted an application to the Supreme Court of the United States to stay the preliminary injunction. This stay was granted by the Supreme Court on July 14, 2026 with a vote of 6-3.

Later that day, all staff who had received an Official RIF Notice received a letter from the Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) stating:

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[12] National Public Radio (NPR), Jonaki Mehta, Cory Turner, *Trump administration targets Education Department research arm in latest cuts*, https://www.npr.org/2025/02/10/nx-s1-5292444/trump-musk-education-department-schools-students-research-cuts (Feb. 10, 2025).
[13] U.S. Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Cancels Additional $350 Million in Woke Spending,* https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-cancels-additional-350-million-woke-spending (Feb. 13, 2025).
[14] CNBC, Annie Nova, *Trump administration removes student loan repayment applications from Education Department website*, https://www.cnbc.com/2025/02/27/student-loan-applications-down-from-education-dept-website.html (Feb. 27, 2026).
[15] *ED Initiates RIF* (March 2025).
[16] *See New York vs. McMahon*, 1:25-cv-10601, (D. Mass), https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69732750/state-of-new-york-v-mcmahon/ (March 13, 2026).

> A RIF notice was previously issued to you on April 10, 2025, with an original separation date of June 10, 2025, under the required 60-day notice period. Following the Supreme Court's decision, your separation date has been adjusted to August 1, 2025. You will receive a final statement of your leave accruals and any additional payments you are entitled to under law.

On or after August 1, 2025, nearly 1,000 employees were terminated or forced to retire from the U.S. Department of Education. To this day, the exact number of affected employees is unknown.

Separately, on March 13, 2025, an additional lawsuit was filed regarding the unlawful RIF of employees in the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), and a preliminary injunction was granted in that case on April 15, 2025.[17] Starting on August 19, the Agency returned 260 OCR employees to work on a biweekly basis throughout the fall. Then, on September 29, the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the preliminary injunction,[18] and a few days into the shutdown, OCR staff were sent notices with termination dates of October 14, 2026. A separate lawsuit was filed by the American Federation of Government Employees and other labor unions, which led to these employees' reinstatement in December 2025, and their RIF notices were revoked in early January 2026.[19]

Finally, during the shutdown, the Agency sent RIF notices to an additional 465 employees on their Government Furnished Equipment (which they were legally barred from accessing during the shutdown). This "shutdown RIF" was paused by a preliminary injunction,[20] and stopped by Congress, but there are still costs associated with the issuing of RIF notices and the agency pursuing termination activities during a lapse in appropriations.

Recent Developments

Since September 2025, just a month after the terminations of the March 2025 RIF took effect, the Department has been posting positions continuously, many of which have position descriptions that are nearly identical to those of RIFed employees. According to documents provided to the Union, 114 positions were posted between September 2025 and May 2026, many of which are attempting to fill up to 10 vacant positions. Although the Agency is required to provide information to RIFed employees about vacancies and must conduct hirings pursuant to the reemployment priority list (RPL) for competitive service employees and priority reemployment list (PRL) for excepted service employees, the Agency failed to provide adequate information about the RPL/PRL and the opportunity to sign up for these lists, individuals did not always receive preference in hiring based upon their inclusion on the

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[17] *Victim's Rights Law Center, et al. v. United States Department of Education, et al.,* 1:25-cv-11042, (D. Mass.) https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69921190/victim-rights-law-center-v-united-states-department-of-education/ (March 13, 2026).

[18] K-12 Dive, Naaz Modan, *Education Department can cut half of OCR staff for now, appeals court rules,* https://www.k12dive.com/news/education-department-can-cut-half-of-ocr-staff-first-appeals-court/761544/ (Sept. 30, 2025).

[19] *American Federation of Government Employees, AFL CIO v. United States Office of Management and Budget* (3:25-cv-08302), https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/71502325/american-federation-of-government-employees-afl-cio-v-united-states/ (Sept. 30, 2025). Hereinafter *AFGE, AFL CIO vs. OMB* (Sept. 2025).

[20] *Supra.*

RPL/PRL, and some RIFed employees accepted jobs at lower grades/steps or with different employment conditions just to obtain a new position with the Agency.

The Department has also solicited contractor support with descriptions nearly identical to RIFed positions as well. For example, in the Office for Civil Rights, after making every effort to terminate employees or have employees voluntarily resign or retire, the Office was drastically understaffed and unable to effectively address its complaint backlog (which has remained at more than 20,000 pending complaints since early 2026). The Agency posted many vacancy announcements in OCR and contracted out some of the work to law firms and other government contractors out of necessity. This is the same work that was being performed by a better-staffed OCR before the RIF.

OCR is one example of that immense loss, but it is hardly the only one. Another example comes from Federal Student Aid, which lost more than one third of its workforce during 2025 (from 1,440 at the close of 2024 to 868 at the close of 2025).[21] In Federal Student Aid (FSA) alone, the Department has plans to hire 380 "new" employees.[22] Many of the posted positions are *identical* to those held by RIFed employees, and yet, those RIFed employees have been told they are unqualified to hold them. At the same time, the Department has hired contractors to fill the same positions left by RIFed employees.[23]

Similar actions can be seen across the department, including in the Institute for Education Sciences and the Office of Finance and Operations. In the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Department promoted from within to fill RIFed positions, and in the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, the Department has outsourced work previously held by RIFed employees to contractors. Outside lawyers were contracted to cover roles in the Office of General Counsel, providing regulatory and ethics oversight in place of RIFed lawyers.

Clearly, the Department cut positions during the RIF that conducted statutorily required work, and the American people deserve to understand the cost to replace those positions, rather than reinstate fired workers as is required by federal law and regulations.

II. Request for Investigation

Secretary McMahon's endeavor to shutter the Department of Education has cost taxpayers untold amounts of money, staff time, expertise, knowledge, and other resources. Your office has already issued two reports outlining the serious management and performance issues stemming from these actions,[24] as

[21] Office of Personnel Management, Workforce Size & Composition, Department of Education, Federal Student Aid, https://data.opm.gov/explore-data/analytics/workforce-size-and-composition (last accessed Sept. 8, 2026).
[22] NPR, Cory Turner, *The U.S. Education Department fired thousands of workers. Now, it's on a hiring spree,* https://www.npr.org/2026/05/21/nx-s1-5820922/education-department-firings-now-hiring (May 21, 2026).
[23] Teal, Job Posting: Federal Student Aid Regulatory Case Analyst, Raventek Solution Partners LLC, https://www.tealhq.com/job/federal-student-aid-regulatory-case-analyst_7ea1a9e5e0f14679130e59be32c8e48b75468 (last accessed Sept. 8, 2026).
[24] Office of the Inspector General, *Fiscal Year 2026 Management Challenges Facing the U.S. Department of Education,* https://oig.ed.gov/reports/top-management-challenges/fiscal-year-2026-management-challenges-facing-us-department (Jan. 22, 2026).

well as the staffing gaps created by the RIF and the effects on statutorily mandated work.[25] Although these reports are integral to beginning to understand the cost (both to the Agency and to the American public) of these RIFs and dismantling, these reports do not adequately quantify the amount of fraud, waste, and abuse by this unlawful endeavor to shutter the Agency.

Please note this document requests an investigation at the Department of Education alone. We acknowledge that ED's OIG has a limited scope and cannot investigate the true cost across the entire federal government, and note that at least the following agencies have spent additional staff time, resources, and financial resources executing and defending the RIF and the dismantling, including but not limited to:

- Department of Justice
- Office of Personnel Management
- Office of Management and Budget
- Department of Interior

Specifically, we request that you investigate the following areas, in addition to any other matters you deem appropriate:

(1) How much has it cost and will it cost ED to defend in litigation, arbitrations, grievances, and Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) proceedings the Agency's firing of more than 70 probationary employees, the March 2025 Reduction in Force (RIF), the October 2025 RIF, and subsequent reinstatements (both in terms of financial and staff resources)?

We ask you to investigate the total actual cost incurred to taxpayers to defend the RIFs and associated firings in all legal proceedings, including but not limited to litigation, arbitrations, grievances, and Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) proceedings. The Agency has wasted an exorbitant amount of taxpayer money on actions that it knew, or should have known, were illegal.

At a minimum, the Agency is utilizing staff time and resources, financial resources, and cross government resources to respond to and navigate the following litigation and grievances challenging the legality and constitutionality of the RIFs and firings.[26] Whatever the result of these legal proceedings, a full and complete tally of all costs will be needed in the long term, including settlements paid and costs of litigation.

We ask you to investigate all costs associated with the following litigation, grievances, and Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) proceedings:

- Litigation about the March 2025 RIF:

[25] Office of the Inspector General, *Review of U.S. Department of Education Changes in Staffing and Operations,* https://oig.ed.gov/reports/other/review-us-department-education-changes-staffing-and-operations (June 22, 2026).
[26] Some of these lawsuits have been consolidated or dismissed, however a historical calculation of all costs associated with these filings is still needed.

    - *New York vs. McMahon*, 1:25-cv-10601, (D. Mass.)
    - *Somerville Public Schools v. Trump*, 1:25-cv-10677, (D. Mass.)
    - *NAACP vs. U.S. Department of Education*, 8:25-cv-00965, (D. Maryland)
    - *Doreen Mullady et al. v. Office of Management and Budget*, 8:26-cv-00573-SAG, (D. Maryland) (regarding eight federal agencies including the Department of Education)
    - *Victim's Rights Law Center, et al. v. United States Department of Education*, 1:25-cv-11042, (D. Mass.) (regarding Office for Civil Rights only)
    - *Carter vs. United States Department of Education,* 1:25-cv-00744, (D.D.C.) (regarding Office for Civil Rights only)
    - *National Academy of Education v. U.S. Department of Education,* 1:25-cv-01266, (D.D.C.) (regarding Institute for Education Sciences only)
    - *American Education Research Association v. U.S. Department of Education* 8:25-cv-01230, (D. Maryland) (regarding Institute for Education Sciences only)
    - *Association for Education Finance and Policy v. McMahon,* 1:25-cv-00999, (D.D.C.) (regarding Institute for Education Sciences only)
- Litigation about Probationary Firings:
    - *American Federation Of Government Employees, AFL-CIO v. United States Office of Personnel Management,* 3:25-cv-01780, (N.D. California)
    - *Maryland v. U.S. Department of Agriculture,* 1:25-cv-00748, (D. Maryland) (regarding several federal agencies including the Department of Education)
- Litigation about October 2025 RIF:
    - *American Federation of Government Employees v. U.S. Office of Management and Budget*, 3:25-cv-08302, (N.D. California)
- National Grievances (on behalf of 2 or more BUEs) in Arbitration:
    - RIF (Notice) | 250624-07464
    - FSA RIF Grievance 1 | 250912-09599
    - FSA RIF Grievance 2 | 250924-09953
    - FSA RIF Grievance 3 | 250924-09957
    - RIF Grievance (8/1/25 + 8/21/25 RIF) | 250916-09676 (Consolidated)
    - Unilateral Changes to Competitive Areas / RIF Policy Grievance | 261106-00870
    - Grievance Regarding Licensing Fees / Bar Dues | 261215-02014
    - Failure to Notify Employees and Union of RIF (10/10/2025) (Shutdown RIF Grievance) | 260112-02639
    - Agency's Failure to Comply with CR
    - Agency's Failure to Pay Severance to BUEs | 260305-04264
    - Reemployment Priority List (RPL) - CBA 21.21 and HCP | 260730-09030
- National Grievances (Settled):
    - Return of Equipment
    - OPM Contact with Represented Employees
    - 7/14/2025 RIF Notice Grievance
- 76 Individual Grievances filed by BUEs, who challenged the RIF in their individual circumstances on top of the National Grievances pursued by the Local
- MSBP Appeals filed by at least 70 ED Employees

- Any other legal matter pertaining to the RIFs at ED

We request the actual costs, itemized budget, expenditures, and audits of staff time by each Department to be publicly released.

(2) How much has it cost and will it cost ED to conduct the RIF and firings (both in terms of financial resources and staff resources)?

We ask you to investigate the actual costs of implementing the Reduction in Force (RIF) in March 2025 and October 2025, as well as the firing of more than 70 probationary employees in February 2025. At a minimum, the Agency has and continues to spend staff time and resources, financial resources, and cross government resources to disrupt its workforce. Unnecessary expenditures of staff time include administrative tasks such as retrieving and cataloging government equipment; filing and updating employee paperwork; issue severance, retirement, and leave payout payments; and to retain RIFed employees on administrative leave.

Costs include, but are not limited to:

- Administrative Leave Salary and Benefits:
  - For 1,378 RIFed Employees for March 12, 2025 to August 2025 (duration dependent on termination/retirement date)
  - For 260 RIFed OCR Employees from August 2, 2025 to return dates (between late August and September 30, 2025, for some employees and December 2025 for others)[27]
- Government Furnished Equipment and PIV Card Retrieval
  - For roughly 1,378 RIFed employees
  - For roughly 74 probationary employees
  - Costs Include
    - Shipping
    - Staff time
    - Employee reimbursements
    - Value of GFE still in employee possession
- Severance:
  - For roughly 1,378 RIFed employees
  - For roughly 74 probationary employees
- Office of Finance and Operations (including CHCO and facilities) Staff Time for activities related to RIF
- Labor and Employee Relations Division (LERD) staff time for activities related to RIF and subsequent RIF grievances and arbitrations
- Office of Chief Information Officer staff time for activities related to RIF
- Office of General Counsel staff time for activities related to RIF

[27] According to the Government Accountability Office (GA), this cost the Department up to $38 million but a firm number was not reported. *See* https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-26-108320.

- Any other staff time spent on activities related to RIF

(3) How much has it cost and will it cost ED to reinstate employees affected by the RIF and firings (both in terms of financial and staff resources)?

In some instances, the Department has realized that it RIFed needed staff, and returned them to work after unnecessary costs and delays. A dozen or so employees in Federal Student Aid (FSA) were reinstated almost immediately after the March RIF notices were sent out, according to Union sources. Dozens of probationary employees were reinstated, also according to Union sources, and all employees in the Office for Civil Rights were reinstated beginning in August 2025.[28] We ask you to investigate the actual costs of reinstating these employees affected by the RIF and firings.

At a minimum, the Agency is utilizing staff time and resources, financial resources, and cross government resources to furnish government equipment; file and update paperwork; and onboard staff.

- OFO (including CHCO and facilities) staff time for activities related to the hiring and onboarding process
- Labor and Employee Relations Division staff time for activities related to the hiring and onboarding process
- Office of Chief Information Officer staff time for activities related to the hiring and onboarding process
- Office of General Counsel staff time for activities related to the hiring and onboarding process
- Hiring Team staff time for activities related to the hiring and onboarding process
- Any other staff time spent on activities related to the hiring and onboarding process
- Furnishment of Government Furnished Equipment and PIV Cards:
    - Costs Include
        - Hardware
        - Software
        - Shipping
        - Staff time
        - Employee reimbursements

(4) How much has it cost and will it cost ED to hire new employees and contractors to fill formerly RIFed positions (both in terms of financial and staff resources)?

The Department has continuously posted jobs since September 2025 (roughly one month after the terminations from the March 2025 RIF took effect).

We ask you to investigate the actual costs of rehiring for positions formerly occupied by employees affected by the RIF and firings. Where possible, we ask that you identify how many of those positions were filled by ED employees affected by the RIF, and who were rehired for their same or similar roles.

[28] K-12 Dive, *Government abandons RIFs impacting Education Department employees during shutdown,* https://www.k12dive.com/news/us-education-department-layoffs-timeline-trump/802881/ (Oct. 15, 2025).

At a minimum, the Agency is utilizing staff time and resources, financial resources, and cross government resources to furnish government equipment; file and update paperwork; and onboard staff.

- OFO (including CHCO and facilities) staff time for activities related to the hiring and onboarding process
- Labor and Employee Relations Division staff time for activities related to the hiring and onboarding process
- Office of Chief Information Officer staff time for activities related to the hiring and onboarding process
- Office of General Counsel staff time for activities related to the hiring and onboarding process
- Hiring Team staff time for activities related to the hiring and onboarding process
- Any other staff time spent on activities related to the hiring and onboarding process
- Furnishment of Government Furnished Equipment and PIV Cards:
    - Costs Include
        - Hardware
        - Software
        - Shipping
        - Staff time
        - Employee reimbursements

In addition, we ask you to request a listing of all contracts with external firms to backfill RIFed positions, and provide an audit of all contracts solicited and positions posted since the RIF in March 2025. Specifically, we would like you to investigate how much has been spent on contractors to fill roles or work left behind by RIFed employees, the costs of such contract solicitations, and the results and efficacy of those contracts. In addition, we ask that you investigate how many of the new hires are for positions substantially identical to a RIF'd position.[29]

(5) How much has it cost and will it cost ED to fulfil statutorily defined duties after the mass firing?

Your office issued a report outlining that the Department lacks the staffing needed to fulfill its statutorily defined duties. We ask you to investigate the actual costs associated with fulfilling the Department's statutory obligations after conducting a mass firing in 2025.

- Overtime Pay, Credit Hours, and Comp Time for remaining staff to fulfil statutorily mandated duties
- Additional contract support
    - Staff time across offices to solicit contract opportunities, review applications, and select contractors

[29] *Supra* note 23.

    - Training for new Contracting Officer Representatives (COR) *(Numerous CORs were laid off in the RIF and the Department has needed to train new CORs to meet statutory obligations)*
    - Financial cost of additional contracts
- Reorganizations to multiple Principal Operating Components (POCs) to address vacancies left by the RIF and other programs, including but not limited to:
    - Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
    - Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education
    - Office of Finance and Operations
    - Office of Chief Information Officer
- Labor and Employee Relations Division staff time for activities related to overtime, reorganizations, etc.
- Office of General Counsel staff time for activities related reorganizations, etc.
- Any other staff time spent on activities related to overtime, reorganizations, etc.

This Administration has made it clear that its goal is to shutter the Department of Education, regardless of the cost to taxpayers, the American people, and the workers devoted to serving those people. Considering the numerous challenges identified in your FY 2026 Management Challenges and Review of U.S. Department of Education Changes in Staffing and Operations reports, we believe additional investigation into the true cost of this effort, and the effect the RIFs and dismantling have had on the Department's ability to effectively carry out its statutory responsibilities is warranted.

The Agency has wasted an exorbitant amount of taxpayer money on actions that it knew, or should have known, were illegal. This is waste. This is fraud. This is abuse. We ask for OIG to shed light where there has been vast darkness around the Agency's actions.

Thank you for your consideration. We stand ready to provide any additional information that may be helpful to your review.

Sincerely,

Rachel Gittleman
President, AFGE Local 252

Arne Duncan
Former U.S. Secretary of Education

John B. King Jr.
Former U.S. Secretary of Education

Miguel Cardona
Former U.S. Secretary of Education

Appendix A: Identity and Interests of the Submitters

● Arne Duncan: Mr. Duncan served as the ninth U.S. Secretary of Education from 2009 to 2015 under President Barack Obama. Prior to joining the Obama Administration, Mr. Duncan served as the CEO of Chicago Public Schools. He is currently a managing partner at the Emerson Collective and the founder of Chicago CRED, a gun violence prevention organization in Chicago.

● John B. King Jr.: Dr. King served as the tenth U.S. Secretary of Education from 2016 to 2017 under President Barack Obama. Before joining President Obama's cabinet, Dr. King served as the Commissioner of the New York State Education Department. He is currently the Chancellor of the State University of New York.

● Miguel Cardona: Dr. Cardona served as the twelfth U.S. Secretary of Education from 2021 to 2025 under President Joe Biden. Before joining President Biden's administration, Dr. Cardona served as the Commissioner of Education in Connecticut. He is currently the founding CEO of Cardona Solutions.

● Rachel Gittleman: Ms. Gittleman has served as President of AFGE Local 252, which represents more than 2,000 Department of Education employees, since October 2025. She previously served in the Ombudsman's Office of Federal Student Aid handling complex borrower casework and serving as liaison to state regulators, attorneys general, and student loan ombudsmen.