

## The Republican Shutdown Harms Students

The **Department of Education** (ED) has [gone dark](#) due to the shutdown, and the Trump Administration has used this opportunity to dismantle the Department of Education further— even though a federal court issued a temporary restraining order [blocking](#) these cuts.

### How the Republican Shutdown Impacts K-12 Education:

- The [Office of Elementary and Secondary Education](#) (OESE) is the primary office responsible for overseeing K-12 education. It is responsible for implementing the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, ensuring compliance with the law and regulations, disbursing formula and discretionary grant funds, and providing states and school districts with technical assistance. The Department has indicated that grantees have the ability to access funds that were allocated to them prior to the shutdown, including [\\$18 billion in Title I funding for high poverty schools](#). However, the shutdown is preventing eligible schools from receiving payments under the [Impact Aid program](#).
- In March, [nearly 20 percent of OESE](#) roles were eliminated by the reduction in force (RIF). Following the October RIFs, only staff in [director level positions](#) would be left in the office, leaving few people to administer the law and programs for which the office is responsible.

### How the Republican Shutdown Impacts Special Education:

- The [Office of Special Education Programs](#) (OSEP) within the [Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services](#) (OSERS) oversees the [grants authorized](#) by the *Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA)*, which ensures that students with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. OSEP has been reduced to only a handful of staff during the shutdown. The most recent RIFs [would leave](#) the office with only a handful of support staff and leadership remaining – insufficient personnel to provide the oversight, technical assistance, and accountability that are necessary to ensure faithful implementation of IDEA.

### How the Republican Shutdown Impacts Higher Education:

- The [Office of Federal Student Aid \(FSA\)](#) oversees the disbursement of federal student aid for postsecondary education. Although FSA employees were spared from the RIFs, the shutdown is impacting some customer service-related supports for colleges and borrowers. ED has indicated that the shutdown will not impact Pell Grant and student loan disbursements for the near-term.

Student loan borrowers are expected to continue making payments on their student loans during the shutdown, and default collections will continue.

- ED also indicated in its shutdown contingency plan that processing student loan discharges could be delayed, but it is worth noting that prior to the shutdown in July, the Department had already paused loan discharges citing [the court injunction on the Savings on a Valuable Education \(SAVE\) Plan](#). However, in mid-October, the agency [agreed to resume loan forgiveness](#) for eligible borrowers on certain repayment plans and borrowers eligible for discharge through Public Service Loan Forgiveness.
- The recent RIFs would [reduce](#) the [Office of Postsecondary Education's \(OPE\)](#) staff by 64 employees, leaving the office nearly empty. OPE oversees most of the grant programs authorized under the *Higher Education Act*, including TRIO and programs for Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). Without OPE staff, it is unclear how grant recipients would receive guidance on how to navigate grant applications and reporting requirements as they seek to follow relevant stipulations that allow them to continue serving their students with these funds. Despite the RIFs, OPE appears to be [still moving forward](#) with negotiated rulemaking to implement H.R. 1's harmful changes to student loans and loan repayment by July 1, 2026.

#### **How the Republican Shutdown Impacts Workforce Development:**

- The [Office of Career and Technical Education](#) (OCTAE) administers the Adult Education and Literacy program, which is the primary federal program for adults to learn to read and write, and earn their General Education Development (G.E.D); and the Perkins Career and Technical Education programs, which oversees career exploration and technical training at high schools, community colleges, and area technical schools. While states will continue to receive these funds through the government shutdown, the high number of furloughed staff at OCTAE will be unable to carry out the basic technical assistance states need for grant management, such as assistance with performance reporting and training for effective instruction in math and literacy for adults.
- The [Rehabilitation Services Administration](#) (RSA) within OSERS oversees [\\$4 billion](#) in funding for [Vocational Rehabilitation \(VR\) programs](#) that help disabled adults find and maintain competitive integrated employment. Like OSEP, RSA's staffing levels were significantly cut through the recent RIFs, and the remaining staff would be insufficient to ensure the administration of VR and other programs if the currently [enjoined](#) RIFs are allowed to take effect.

#### **How the Republican Shutdown Impacts Civil Rights:**

- The [Office for Civil Rights](#) (OCR) enforces multiple federal laws relating to discrimination in education settings, including Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1965*, Title IX of the *Education Amendments of 1972*, and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. While all operations of the Office have been suspended due to the shutdown, OCR has been operating [anything but normally during this Administration](#).
  - [Seven of OCR's twelve regional offices](#), serving over 55 percent of the country on a population basis, were closed in March. OCR's case backlog, which stood at approximately

12,000 at the beginning of the term, is estimated to have [doubled](#). Now, due to recent RIFs, only approximately 100 staff members will remain in OCR, compared to the 560 staff members at the end of the last administration.

- The remaining OCR staff, with caseloads well beyond the 71-per-person the Biden Administration deemed “[unmanageable](#)”, dismissed cases [at a record pace](#) this summer. Even students and parents with active OCR cases have had those cases seemingly [abandoned by OCR](#), raising questions about whether the office can fulfill its statutory duties and whether complaints to OCR are being given adequate consideration.