

# Federal Employees ‘Angered’ And ‘Fearful’ At Having To Do What Their Boss Says

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**Confusion and anger, fear and chaos, disruption across the federal government — how dare the president!**

Federal employees and their trusted champions in corporate media are incensed by the new administration’s actions directed at them. “Federal employees confused, angered by Trump’s offer to quit,” read a Feb. 1 CNN report. “‘Fear’ and ‘chaos’ grip federal workers as Trump rapidly remakes the government,” declared NBC. “Trump’s revenge targets feds, expands his power and disrupts government,” warned The Washington Post.

Confusion and anger, fear and chaos, disruption across the federal government — how dare the president! Perhaps those among the committed left can muster the appropriate pearl-clutching regarding a legitimately elected president exerting control over an executive branch that falls within his constitutionally defined authority. But for the rest of America, it’s hard to generate much outrage over Trump *doing precisely what he said he would do* during a 2024 presidential campaign in which he won both the popular vote and the electoral college.

## **What’s Got the Left Losing Their Minds**

Superficially, it’s easy to appreciate why the new administration’s disruptive actions over the last few weeks are being pegged by the left as radically dangerous. They’re freezing foreign aid to millions of people around the world in desperate need! They’re cruelly offering a buyout to millions of federal employees! They’re ending remote work opportunities, they won’t be able to hire young

people! They're going to eliminate the Department of Education and its \$4 billion budget that provides essential services to millions of American schoolchildren!

Voters can be forgiven for getting a bit worried. Shut down USAID overseas missions that do good around the world? Isn't it a bad idea to cut the size of the federal workforce by 10 percent, or perhaps even more? Don't we need a 3 million-strong federal civilian workforce to perform all kinds of basic services? Won't American civilization as we know it simply grind to a halt without the current staffing of these federal agencies? At least, that's the narrative of The Washington Post, the outlet whose readership is disproportionately composed of federal employees.

### **The Reality of Federal Service**

While it's true that the federal government does indeed provide lots of essential services to American citizens (e.g. agencies focused on national security, the U.S. Postal Service, Veterans Affairs), federal employees as a professional demographic are also the most pampered and insulated workforce in our nation. They get more leave than private-sector employees and generally work fewer hours. Federal employees enjoy unparalleled levels of legal protection from being fired, protections that were strengthened during the Biden administration.

Unlike non-federal workers, who can be fired at will, federal workers can only be fired for cause, a process that includes a step-by-step action plan. For example, to be fired for poor performance, the employee must first be presented with a negative performance review, something that typically takes a year. *Then* the employee is placed on a performance improvement plan (PIP) in which he or she has to meet regularly with their supervisor and discuss how things are going. Poor performers can be fired only if they fail to improve; even marginal improvement is good enough to get off a PIP. Given how time-consuming this is, many supervisors prefer to simply "pass the trash," waiting until they, or the employee, change offices.

Then there's the incredible amount of freedom federal agencies have to operate independently of the guidance and directives of the president and his appointees, unaccountable to voters in their decision-making or use of taxpayer dollars. The "interagency," a process by which various federal organizations meet to work through executive decisions, acts as an incredibly effective tool to slow and obstruct the executive power of the president and the meager 4,000 appointees he's

allowed. The experience of Theo Wold, an official during the first Trump term, is telling.

### **The Left Can't Be This Naive**

Many federal employees are anonymously telling corporate media how mistreated they have been by the new administration's many directives, how deeply insulted they feel by the administration's aggressive, seemingly mean-spirited character. They can't believe an elected president would seek to exert this kind of influence over them, demanding they align their work with his policy priorities or face being sidelined or even terminated. Former Department of State employee Chuck Park in an op-ed for the Washington Post bemoans that the president "has two hands firmly on the steering wheel. His administration is moving with intention, not abandon." Federal employees must not violate their consciences, Park urges.

This outrage reflects such a lack of self-awareness and tone-deafness it's hard to take seriously. As diligently cataloged in such works as John Marini's *Unmasking the Administrative State*, Joseph Postell's *Bureaucracy in America*, and most recently Adam Lovinger's *The Insider Threat*, the federal administrative state for decades has been given incredible latitude to pursue its own agenda based on supposed "expertise," an expertise that is demonstrably liberal in its political orientation. And its proceduralism is purposely byzantine in order to make it more difficult to dismantle. As Marini aptly observes, James Madison never would have predicted that the federal government *itself*, rather than just groups of like-minded citizens, would become a "faction." Even more alarming, the plethora of agencies encompassing that government have been allowed to perform executive, legislative, and judicial functions — also unconstitutional.

Surely federal bureaucrats are not so ill-informed as to not know their accountability to the American people is mediated through the executive branch — namely, the president (even the aforementioned piece by a former State employee acknowledges as much). That their executive is taking (admittedly dramatic) steps to exert control over them may be uncomfortable and even insulting, but it shouldn't be surprising, especially given how much resistance they offered in Trump's first term. The outrage of federal employees to that effort only proves how deeply the left's ideology defines the mentality of so much of a (disproportionately liberal) federal workforce and their day-to-day work. In their minds, they can't separate the missions of various federal agencies from liberal political ideology. That sounds like all the more reason to rein them in.