

Judge Dismisses Challenge to Trump-Era Cuts on Diversity-Focused Research Grants

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A federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit brought by 16 Democrat-led states seeking to reverse the Trump administration's decision to cut funding for diversity initiatives in science and technology. The ruling marks a legal win for efforts to reshape federal grant priorities away from race- and gender-based programs.

On Friday, U.S. District Judge John Cronan ruled against the states' request to block the National Science Foundation (NSF) from withdrawing previously awarded grants aimed at increasing representation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. The plaintiffs argued that the NSF had overstepped its authority by canceling programs designed to support women, minorities, and other underrepresented groups in those disciplines.

The lawsuit, originally filed in May, contended that the NSF's move violated the National Science Foundation Act by eliminating grants that Congress had authorized. However, Judge Cronan — who was appointed to the bench by former President Donald Trump — concluded that the matter did not fall under his jurisdiction. Instead, he said any dispute involving already-terminated federal grants must be heard by the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, which handles monetary claims against the federal government.

Cronan also rejected the assertion that the NSF's updated funding guidelines were inconsistent with its legal obligations. The new directive, issued in April, stated that research must benefit "all Americans everywhere" and cautioned against prioritizing specific subgroups. The same day the new policy was released, the NSF began canceling certain grants linked to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.

Despite the terminations, Cronan noted that the NSF has continued to support diversity-related research across various institutions, including some in the states that brought the lawsuit. "This evidence powerfully undermines Plaintiffs' argument that the Priority Directive renders this class of projects categorically ineligible for funding," he wrote.

The NSF declined to comment on the ruling. A spokesperson for New York Attorney General Letitia James, who led the challenge, stated that the office is reviewing the court's decision.

The case underscores the ongoing national debate over the role of DEI-focused policies in government programs, particularly in education and scientific research. President Trump has consistently opposed the expansion of such initiatives, both during and after