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## U.S. Education Department Ends Work-Study Political Jobs

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– Categories: Politics & Government

The U.S. Department of Education has announced a significant policy change, ending the use of **Federal Work-Study (FWS)** funds for jobs linked to political activism, voter outreach, and similar activities. The decision, issued on **August 19, 2025**, redefines how federal funds are allocated within higher education institutions, focusing the program strictly on employment that builds direct career skills.

For years, FWS supported part-time positions such as poll worker roles, voter hotline staff, and campus voter registration assistants. These jobs were presented as community engagement opportunities, but under the revised guidance, they no longer qualify for federal funding. The department clarified that FWS is intended to help students gain work experience relevant to their professional development, not to support electoral or partisan activities.

The update also refines how colleges handle voter registration under the **Higher Education Act**. While institutions must make a “good faith” effort to provide registration forms, they are not required to distribute them to students who are ineligible to vote, such as non-U.S. citizens. Colleges must also inform students that:

- Only U.S. citizens may participate in federal elections.
- Double voting or false registrations are illegal.
- Voter registration is tied to permanent residence, which must be accurate.

This move follows criticism from **Republican state attorneys general**, who argued that previous guidance blurred legal boundaries by allowing taxpayer dollars to fund voter

mobilization efforts. The revised policy aligns with broader federal priorities aimed at keeping educational funding neutral and focused on workforce readiness.

Supporters of the decision say it restores the original intent of the FWS program, ensuring federal aid is used to help students prepare for careers rather than political engagement. Critics, however, argue that it could reduce civic participation opportunities for college students, particularly those who relied on federally funded roles to gain experience in democratic processes.

Universities are now expected to redirect their FWS job offerings toward roles that meet the updated criteria. Students interested in political or civic work may need to seek volunteer opportunities or alternative funding sources.

The change reflects a growing debate over the role of higher education in political life and how federal funding should be applied. By narrowing the scope of FWS, the Department of Education aims to emphasize its original purpose as a workforce development tool, rather than a platform for political activity.