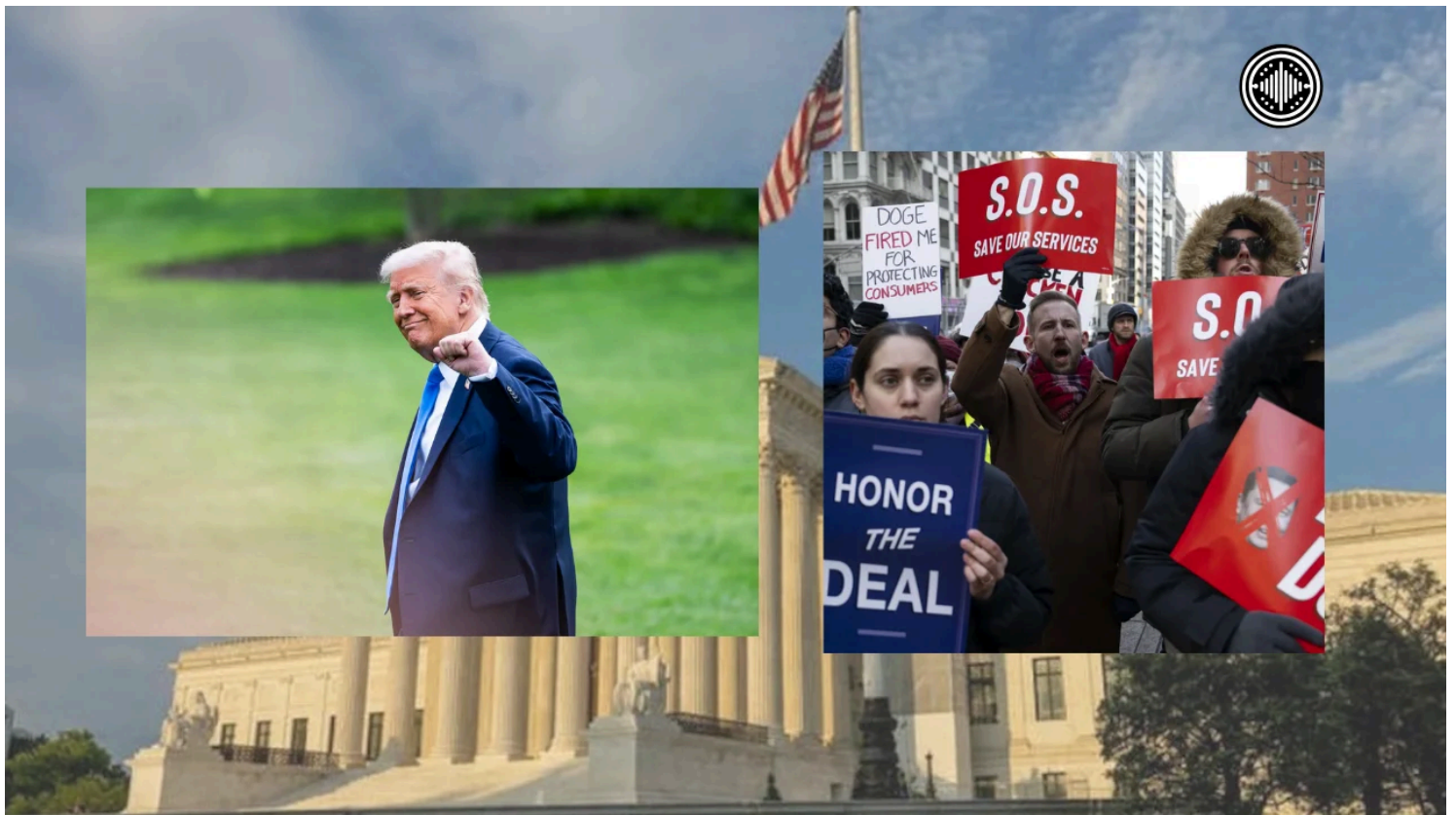


Supreme Court Clears Trump Plan to Fire Federal Workers

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The Supreme Court's recent decision has sent shockwaves through the federal workforce, paving the way for the Trump administration to resume one of the largest reorganizations of the government in decades. In an 8-1 ruling, the Court lifted a lower-court injunction that had frozen mass layoffs across federal agencies, leaving tens of thousands of workers anxious about what comes next.

For many civil servants, the decision shattered the long-held belief that their jobs were protected by civil service laws and collective bargaining agreements. Now, agencies from

the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) are preparing to implement sweeping cuts. The administration argues these reductions are overdue and necessary to modernize government, but for employees, the news feels like the floor has fallen out from under them.

“All of my friends are resigned to the worst,” said a staffer at the National Institutes of Health who asked not to be named due to fear of retaliation. Some workers described sitting together in break rooms or even in building basements where the air conditioning was stronger to wait for updates from agency lawyers about their fate. At the EPA’s headquarters in Washington, employees said they were “waiting on pins and needles.”

The administration plans to restart layoffs agency by agency, though officials say they will proceed “consistent with all applicable legal requirements.” However, the sudden uncertainty has already taken a toll. Employees at the Department of Transportation, for example, are bracing for potential cuts even as the agency grapples with the aftermath of a tragic midair collision. While air traffic controllers themselves were reportedly not targeted for termination, supporting staff could be affected, raising concerns about the agency’s capacity to maintain safety.

The Department of Energy and the Department of Agriculture are also expected to see significant reductions. Energy officials had previously designated about 9,000 of their 16,000 workers as “essential,” leaving the rest at risk. Agriculture has already offered multiple rounds of buyouts and may consider more.

At the Department of Labor, plans to lay off hundreds in the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs were paused during litigation. Those employees now face renewed uncertainty. A staffer who had been placed on administrative leave in April said they still hadn’t heard anything official since the Supreme Court decision.

Meanwhile, the Environmental Protection Agency has been a particular focus for the administration. Earlier this year, EPA leadership announced plans to cut 65 percent of spending, which could ultimately return the agency’s workforce to Reagan-era levels. Workers in offices that focus on environmental justice, helping communities most harmed by pollution, fear those programs will be hollowed out. “The administration has chosen to abandon communities most impacted by pollution,” one EPA employee said.

Union leaders and advocacy groups have promised to keep fighting. The American Federation of Government Employees, the largest union representing federal workers, has said it will pursue narrower legal challenges against individual agency plans. Justice Sonia Sotomayor noted in her opinion that such specific cases could still succeed if plaintiffs can show that agencies are breaking the law.

James-Christian Blockwood, president of the National Academy of Public Administration, cautioned that while reforms to the bureaucracy may be necessary, “indiscriminately dismissing and disparaging public servants will surely impact the government’s ability to retain and recruit the best workforce.”

At the National Institutes of Health, some employees said they were already considering early retirement or other exits rather than wait for the outcome. “I’m ready to retire if I can,” one staffer admitted.

Though some agencies, like the Department of Education, remain temporarily shielded by separate court orders, many workers feel the tide is turning against them. As agency plans move forward in the coming weeks, the next phase of legal battles will likely decide whether the cuts become permanent or are again put on hold.

For now, thousands of federal employees are left in limbo, hoping that their jobs and the missions they serve can survive the push to downsize government.

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