



Education
Healthcare
Public Services

2/26/25

Legislative Update AFT Retiree PPC

Social Security Fairness Act Update



- Signed into law Jan 5th
- Eliminates the Windfall Elimination Program (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO)
- First expansion of earned Social Security benefits in decades.²

Why WEP and GPO Repeal is so significant

- Reduced the benefits of public sector employees who had worked in select states in the public sector and in Social Security covered employment at different points in their careers.
- WEP and GPO impacted educators and school staff in PreK-12 and higher education, in 15 states. In total, it hurt public employees in 26 states.
- Over 3.2 million workers total will benefit from WEP/GPO repeal

Implementing the Social Security Fairness Act

- SSA FAQ
<https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/social-security-fairness-act.html>
- Yesterday, SSA projects **April** implementation
- Lump sum payment for 2024
- Monthly benefit adjustment

Implementing the Social Security Fairness Act (cont'd)

- Effective this week, SSA is beginning to pay retroactive benefits and will increase monthly benefit payments to people whose benefits have been affected by WEP and GPO.
 - **If a beneficiary is due retroactive benefits, they will receive a one-time retroactive payment deposited into the bank account SSA has on file, by the end of March (i.e.-this is the lump sum for 2024 that Biden mentioned.)**
- Most affected beneficiaries will begin receiving their new monthly benefit amount in April 2025 (for their March 2025 benefit)
- The beneficiary will receive a mailed notice explaining the benefit change and/or retroactive payment

What are Executive Orders?

Executive order: an official document signed by the president declaring government policy



- Instructions to government agencies and departments about how to execute and enforce legislation
- Trump is using executive orders more broadly to circumvent Congress and implement Trump policy priorities.

Ways to
Fight
Back



JUDICIARY

CONGRESS

- Courts may declare EO unconstitutional if it oversteps the executive power granted by law
- Judges may postpone enforcement of EO until a final judgement has been made
- Congress may pass legislation revoking or modifying the powers it gave to a president through previous legislation
- If vetoed by the president, Congress can override with 2/3 majority vote in both chambers

These efforts are underway.

Top Executive Orders AFT is Tracking

- K-12 Culture Wars
- Vouchers
- Dep. of Education Closure
- Funding Freeze + Attacking DEIA and Clean Energy
- Schedule F
- DOGE
- Immigration
- LGBTQIA+ Attacks
- Rolling Back Gun Violence Prevention

K-12 Culture Wars: ‘Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling’

What it is	Reshapes the role of the federal government in public education and weaponizing the Department of Education against students.
What it Means	Eliminates funding or support for “illegal and discriminatory” treatment and indoctrination in K-12 schools—prohibiting their favorite bogeymen: DEI, critical race theory, etc.
What AFT is doing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with our Civil Rights partners• AFT Press Release and memos for leaders

Vouchers: 'Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families'

What it is	Effort to syphon federal money for public schools into unaccountable private hands by redirecting money for current programs to private school vouchers.
What it Means	<p>Orders ED to direct discretionary funding to vouchers. Does not include formula funding like Title I or IDEA, but grant programs including community schools and some CTE programs.</p> <p>Defense and Interior directed to find alternatives for the DoDEA and BIE schools.</p>
What AFT is doing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with K12, church state and disability groups• AFT Press Release and memos for leaders• Order is not legal as programs authorized by Congress

Expected:

Dismantling the U.S. Dep. of Education

What we expect	Effort to weaken the Dep. of Education by calling on Congress to develop a legislative plan to abolish ED and/or defund programs
What it will mean	Fully abolishing the department would require an act of Congress, and lawmakers have for years shown little interest in doing so. Expect it will attempt to shut down functions of the agency that aren't written explicitly into statute or move certain functions to other departments.
What AFT will do	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• E-action calling Members of Congress• Work with education partners• Local events protesting what losing support for education programs means

Immigration

What it is

Trump changed longstanding policy when he rescinded a Biden-era policy to now allow ICE to enter and conduct raids in schools, hospitals and places of worship. Other immigration EOs involve sending troops to the border, ending birthright citizenship, fast-tracking deportation, revoking short term legal status for migrants from certain countries, reducing access to legal representation, freezing refugee admittance and more.

What it Means

The Department of Homeland Security withdrew enforcement guidance restricting ICE agents from arresting undocumented immigrants at sensitive locations such as hospitals and schools. Other immigration measures, like ending birthright citizenship, have been temporarily halted by courts as they consider legal challenges.

What AFT is doing

- AFT [letter](#) to Trump calling on him to reverse directive
- [AFT Press Release](#)
- [AFT Immigration Resources](#)
- [AFT Webinars](#)

Memo: Funding Freeze + Attacking DEI, Clean Energy and more.

What it is	<p>On 1/27 OMB issued a two-page memo requiring all agencies to pause federal programs</p> <p>On 1/28 OMB walked back the enormous scope of its initial memo to say it only applies to DEI, 'Green New Deal' and gender ideology programs.</p>
What it Means	<p>Unclear with conflicting orders. Funding freezes at NIH and HHS impacting IHE, research grants, health information, etc. Some funding for clean energy, infrastructure, foreign assistance, and support for diversity efforts has been held up. Two courts have issued temporary restraining orders preventing EOs, and subsequent freezes, from going through.</p>
What AFT is doing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AFT Press Releases on freeze and rescinded memo• E-Action asking members of Congress to oppose these efforts in whatever form they may come.• Joined letters opposing OMB nominee Russell Vought• Supporting lawsuits from partners with standing including state attorneys general.

Schedule F: 'Restoring Accountability to Policy-Influencing Positions Within the Federal Workforce'

What it is	Trump reinstated his controversial policy Schedule F, now renamed Schedule Policy/Career, to strip hundreds of thousands of federal workers of their civil service protections.
What it Means	Effort to corrupt the federal government by eliminating employees' due process rights so employees can be fired for political reasons and replaced with unqualified loyalists.
What AFT is doing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with our federal affiliates, other unions and partners• AFGE, AFSCME filed lawsuit challenging Trump's Schedule F EO

Establishing Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)

What it is	Trump put Elon Musk in charge of directing DOGE to drastically cut federal spending and modernize technology across the federal government.
What it Means	Trump created an advisory committee that should be subject to certain federal rules, including transparency requirements; it is not a Cabinet-level department.
What AFT is doing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AFT, along with partners, filed a federal lawsuit challenging the secret operation of DOGE under the Federal Advisory Committee Act.• Republican legislatures across the country – TX, MO, NH, NC, OK, IA, WI, KS – are setting up committees and task forces mirroring Elon Musk’s “Dept of Govt Efficiency.”

Attacking Federal Agencies, Propping Up DOGE

What it is	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On 2/19 Trump signed two EOs, one "Commencing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy" and another on implementing DOGE• On 2/18 Trump signed an EO "Ensuring Accountability for All Agencies"
What it Means	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Terminates advisory councils on aid, research, banking• Agency heads must develop RIF plans, abide by hiring ratios and get DOGE approval to hire, clear rulemaking with OMB• Asserts sweeping control over independent regulatory agencies. Trump also fired key heads essentially shutting down CFPB, NLRB, EEOC, etc.
What AFT is doing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AFT Press Releases on lawsuits fighting DOGE• E-Action asking members of Congress to oppose these efforts in whatever form they may come.• Joined letters opposing the firing of NLRB Member Wilcox• Pursuing lawsuits, one that has temporarily paused DOGE access to sensitive personal data

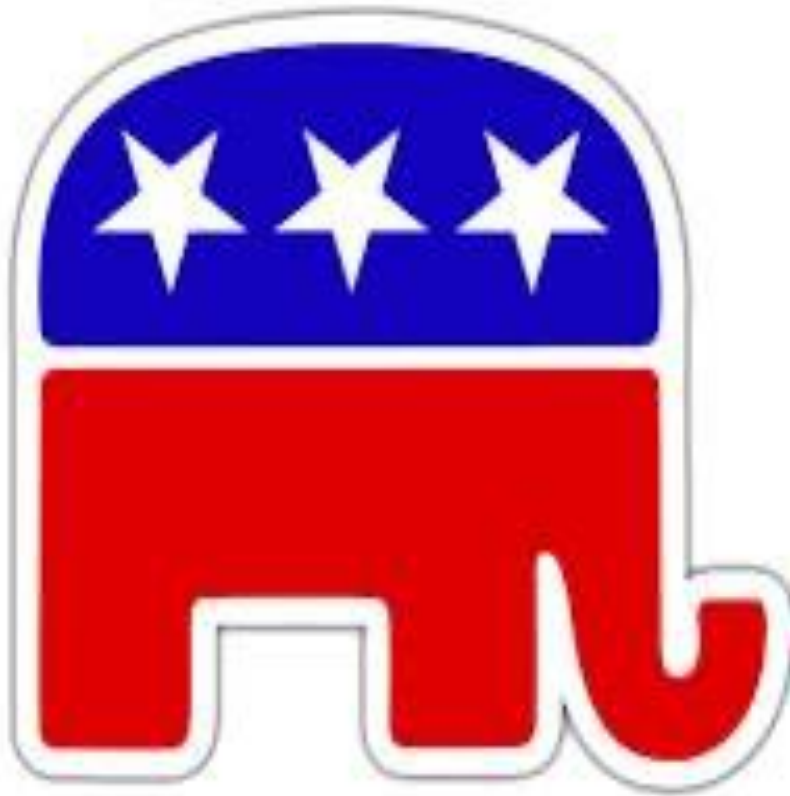
Debt Ceiling: Republican Conundrum

The US reached the federal debt limit after the suspension expired on **January 1**.

Failure for the U.S. to pay the bills would cause tremendous economic harm to the American people, which is why Democrats typically support increasing the debt ceiling. However, given Trump's spending freeze and attempts to circumvent the separation of powers, Dems are less likely to come to the rescue to save the Rs from internal divisions.

Donald Trump has previously stated that "Congress must get rid of, or extend out to, perhaps, 2029, the ridiculous Debt Ceiling. Without this, we should never make a deal. Remember, the pressure is on whoever is President."

STATUS OF DEBT CEILING LEGISLATION Trump's sway on the GOP: President Trump has asked Congress several times to either raise the debt ceiling or eliminate it altogether, putting him at odds with ultra conservative lawmakers that still see the debt ceiling as a tool that limits federal spending. His attempt in December to get Republicans to raise the debt ceiling failed.



Budget Resolution Comparison

Senate

- \$350 Billion for immigration/border enforcement (\$175 Judiciary and \$175 Homeland Security)
- \$150 Billion for additional defense spending
- Spends \$20 Billion on transportation
- Sets the stage for deep cuts in SNAP, Medicaid, and other vital programs
- Does not tackle taxes
- Silent on the debt limit

House

- At least \$4.5 Trillion for tax cuts – the committee may offset tax cuts with other tax increases (such as the SALT cap).
- \$880 Billion in cuts to Medicaid.
- \$330 Billion from student loans (making repayment more expensive, repealing protection for scammed students, etc. May include limits on PSLF and making colleges pay fees)
- \$230 Billion cut from SNAP (food stamps)
- \$200 Billion for immigration/border enforcement (\$110 Judiciary and \$90 Homeland Security)
- Opens more oil and gas drilling and claws back \$10 billion in Biden era transportation funding
- Includes \$4 Trillion increase to the debt limit

List of Possible Cuts in a Final Budget Resolution



Cutting health care to help fund tax cuts for the top 2 percent

Medicaid provides health care coverage to nearly 1 in 5 Americans, supports school staff and helps to keep hospitals open. Cuts would hurt new moms, children with special needs, veterans and seniors could lose their Medicaid coverage and/or receive lower-quality care in nursing home

Cutting nutrition assistance while providing a \$6 million tax cut for the heirs of the largest estates.

On the chopping block is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which is the nation's largest anti-hunger program and serves 1 in 8 Americans. Close to 40 million could receive less help.

Making college less affordable for students and making colleges pay fees.

Taxing tuition scholarships, limiting federal student aid like Pell Grants, making student loans more expensive and eliminating the tax deduction for student loan interest. Requiring colleges to pay a fee to access student aid. Up to 5 million college students who use federal loans could face higher expenses.

Continuing Resolution (CR)



- Although we are more than half-way through Fiscal Year 2025, Congress has not passed full year funding bills yet.
- Most likely that a continuing resolution will be needed to keep the government running after **March 14**. The potential for a government shut down is real.
- Because of their slim majority, Republicans will need the Democrats to get bill through and needless to say they are not so inclined.

Looking Ahead: Social Security

- Threats from the Trump administration
- DOGE
 - Access to sensitive data
 - Musk spreading disinformation
 - Resignation of key personal
- Compliant SSA Leadership
 - Frank Bisignano, Fiserv CEO, has been nominated to be SSA Commissioner
 - Lee Dudek is Acting Commissioner after Michelle King's resignation

Social Security and Congress

- Threats from Congress
 - Flat funding for SSA
 - Implementation of Trump's campaign pledges to not tax benefits (\$1 trillion), tips or overtime
 - GOP members of Congress friendly to DOGE and to cuts
 - BUT procedural rules prevent the GOP from reforming Social Security with a simple majority!

Looking Ahead: Medicaid

Most prominent target of GOP budget resolutions

- Medicaid supports 3 out of 5 nursing facility residents.
- Most prominent target of GOP budget resolutions
- 7.2 million Americans over 65 are enrolled in Medicaid
- Hospitals will face closure or reduced services. AFT estimates that more than 100,000 healthcare professionals could lose their jobs.
- If federal Medicaid funding is dramatically reduced, states will be forced to reduce cut law enforcement, libraries and other public services.
- Don't believe the lies: Most people on Medicaid are working or in school. The program is cost effective. Medicaid is popular among Democrats and Republicans.

Polling Highlights

- Families Over Billionaires survey data
- 76% of voters disapprove of more tax cuts for the rich
 - Including 67% of Trump voters, only 2% said tax cuts were a top reason they voted
 - 84% of working class voters
- 70% of voters oppose House GOP's budget
- 82% oppose Medicaid cuts

Fighting Back: AFT's March 4th Day of Action

- Protect Our Kids and Stand Up for Public schools
- 100+ Actions Nationwide
- Learn more:
<https://www.aft.org/ProtectOurKids>
- Find an event or register an event:
www.mobilize.us/aft

Fighting Back: Contacting Congress

- Visit [AFT Votes Action](#) to write your lawmakers opposing education cuts
- Visit AFT.org to write your lawmakers [opposing Medicaid cuts](#), [Musk' power grab](#) and [anti-immigrant measures](#)
- Call your lawmakers at 202-224-3121 and tell them not to cut vital programs to fund tax breaks for billionaires

OUR MISSION

The **AFT** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

Fedrick C. Ingram
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Evelyn DeJesus
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

