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Trump executive orders roll back civil rights, workers' rights, and greenlight fraud

By Mark Gruenberg

WASHINGTON—Not content with trashing federal workers' rights, Republican President Donald Trump—who as a young New York developer violated federal fair and open housing laws—wants to roll back the civil rights revolution, too.

Not only that, but a separate Trump executive order fires at least 17 key watchdogs—independent Inspectors General at various agencies. That move opens the way to widespread fraud by the corporate class unseen since, well, the first Trump government, which began eight years ago and lasted four years.

So far, the responses to the Trump edicts have ranged from scattershot to verbal screams with promises for future action to, in the case of the IGs, inaction by then-Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer, D-N.Y.

Some workers and unions are already fighting back against Trump's orders, however.

The Government Employees (AFGE) marched into court in D.C., accompanied by the Teachers/AFT and two good-government groups, two days after the inauguration. They're suing Trump over the schemes of his "Department of Government Efficiency," headed by multimillionaire Elon Musk, to meet behind closed doors, with no accountability, to arbitrarily cut hundreds of thousands of workers.

"We're part of this new lawsuit because DOGE must come out of the shadows & comply with the law before the sweeping, self-serving plans of billionaires upend the federal government and cause irreparable damage in the lives of working people," Teachers President Randi Weingarten tweeted.

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Lawsuit or no lawsuit, Trump's actions, contained in the more than 200 executive orders he issued during his first days in office, are already taking effect:

- Trump abolished all federal offices established to promote diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) principles within the federal workforce and full accessibility to government contract opportunities by firms owned by disadvantaged groups—notably by people of color and people with disabilities.

Workers in those DEI offices were furloughed, with pay, through the end of January, prior to being RIFed—government lingo for being fired—after that. Trump Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the first Cabinet officer the Republican-run Senate confirmed, told his agency's 60 DEI office workers to go home, and don't bother coming back. Don't call us, unless we call you—for another position.



"Critical and influential institutions, including the federal government, major corporations, financial institutions, the medical industry, large commercial airlines, law enforcement agencies, and institutions of higher education have adopted and actively use dangerous, demeaning, and immoral race- and sex-based preferences under the guise of so-called "diversity, equity, and inclusion" (DEI) or "diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility" (DEIA) that can violate the civil-rights laws" Trump's executive order declared.

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CONTINUING THE DAILY WORKER



For over a century, People's World and its predecessor publications have taken the side of the 99 percent and worked to promote the struggle for a sustainable environment, jobs, democracy, peace, and equality.

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"The administration escalated the assault the day after by threatening federal employees with disciplinary action if they fail to report on their colleagues who defy orders," the main union for federal workers, AFGE reported.

"People on the internet immediately suggested spamming the two email addresses, DEIATRUTH@opm.gov and DEIAREPORTS@opm.gov as a way to protest the government's attempts to get federal employees to spy on one another."

Trump says DEI goals "deny, discredit, and undermine the traditional American values of hard work, excellence, and individual achievement in favor of an unlawful, corrosive, and pernicious identity-based spoils system." A spoils system is exactly what Trump wants to create with another anti-worker order, Schedule F, AFGE says.

"Hardworking Americans who deserve a shot at the American Dream should not be stigmatized, demeaned, or shut out of opportunities because of their race or sex," Trump declares. For "hardworking Americans," read "white men."

- But Trump really wants to abolish the 1960s civil rights revolution. That movement produced the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the 1968 open/fair housing law—the statute Trump and his developer father, Fred, broke. They tried to bar Blacks from the federally aided public housing project they erected in New York City.

In the same order where he banned DEI, Trump outlawed federal promotion of affirmative action and "workforce balancing based on race, color, sex, sexual preference, religion, or national origin." He also barred federal contractors from doing that, too.

Cut numbers of workers

And he'll cut the number of workers. A Trump order freezes the federal workforce at just over two million, but that includes vacancies and he banned agencies from filling those.

Trump also ordered his Office of Personnel Management—the government's HR department—to collect lists of all "new" workers currently in their probationary period. News reports say he wants to can all of them, and they could number several hundred thousand. Unlike the unionized sector of private industry, federal probation lasts at least a year and sometimes two.

- Trump ordered all federal workers back to their offices full-time, unless, literally, there is no office to go back to. The only other exception is if union contracts specifically permit remote work and/or telework. And Trump wants OPM to eliminate that permission, too.

"To justify this backward action, lawmakers and members of Trump's transition team spent months exaggerating the number of federal employees who telework and accusing those who do of failing to perform the duties of their jobs," says AFGE President Clarence Kelley. "The truth: Less than half of all federal jobs are eligible for telework, and the workers eligible to telework still spend most of their work hours at their regular duty stations."

The White House Trumpites are reportedly steaming that outgoing Democratic President Joe Biden's Social Security Administration, led by former Gov. Martin O'Malley, D-Md., signed such a contract with the AFGE local representing Social Security staffers. Trump seeks a way override that clause.

"Whether AFGE will file a lawsuit depends on how it is implemented. If they violate our contracts, we will take appropriate action to uphold our rights," Kelley warns.

- Trump arbitrarily fired 12 of the top 17 Inspectors General, in what was literally a midnight massacre of accountability. The other five IG offices, including the IG for the biggest agency of all, the military, are vacant.

Like the Director of the FBI, the IGs' terms run beyond the limits of one presidential term, in an attempt to keep the IGs free from political influence and free to be giant whistleblowers. Early removals are supposed to be only "for cause" and only after notifying Congress and waiting a month for lawmakers to nullify such firings.

The limit on FBI directors didn't prevent Trump from canning controversial agency Director James Comey almost immediately after Trump took over eight years ago, and similar term limits didn't prevent Trump's moves against the IGs now.

Then-Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., brushed aside a November letter from 18 organizations, led by the Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, demanding he get senators to OK Biden's AG nominees before the last Congress adjourned and Schumer lost that power.

Others on the letter included the Professional and Technical Engineers, the small Plate Printers, Die Stampers, Plate Makers and Engravers, the National Federation of Federal Employees/Machinists, the Printing, Packaging and Production Workers/GCIU and the Workers Circle.

"In fiscal year 2023, IG offices were estimated to have generated \$93.1 billion in potential savings for the American public, with a \$26 return on every taxpayer dollar invested," the groups wrote.

Provided critical oversight

"In the nearly 50 years since the first IG positions were established, IG offices continued to provide critical independent oversight that enabled Congress to conduct proper oversight and improved the integrity of our government. At a time when trust in government is low and we face rising threats of authoritarianism at home and abroad, the role of Inspectors General is more important than ever.

"Confirming these diverse and highly qualified individuals is of paramount importance at a time when the incoming administration has made clear through its words and deeds a desire to skirt the ethical guardrails designed to prevent unlawful behavior...Without their confirmation, the executive branch will lack the internal expertise it needs to detect and eliminate corruption, waste and malfeasance.

As evidence from Trump's first term shows, the lack of a watchdog—or turning the IG into a Trumpite lapdog—isn't just an injustice to the individual workers or the whistleblowers who trust them. During the coronavirus pandemic, it cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in cash doled out to companies or individuals, including billionaires, who didn't need it, to political favorites, or both.

Several billionaires, both Democrats and Republicans, got government checks which Congress meant to target to low-income people, ProPublica reported. The IGs couldn't have prevented that: The checks were based on federal income tax wage and salary records—from the W-2 forms.

But the forms don't disclose the honchos took most of their payouts in stock, options and the like. And even when they made over a million bucks apiece, they found ways offset it through "deductions," often manipulating the tax code.

"Forrest Preston, the founder of Life Care Centers of America, one of the largest long-term care companies in the U.S., is worth \$1.2 billion. In 2009, he got his \$400 boost," from that year's tax break for individuals after the financier-caused crash of the year before, ProPublica reported. His W-2 income was zero.

"The next year, he posted an income of \$112 million. By 2018, however, his income had gone negative again, entitling him to a \$1,200 payment in 2020. The same year he received his stimulus check, Preston's company successfully lobbied to win a tax break for the nursing home industry."

Congressional Democrats, and, to his credit, veteran Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, have put up a ruckus about Trump's beheading of the IGs. Grassley is their longtime defender.

"I guess it's the case of whether he believes in congressional oversight," Grassley said of Trump. "I work closely with all the Inspector Generals... and I intend to defend them," he told Politico.

Another congressional veteran, Rep. Gerald Connolly, D-Va., was more caustic. During his first term, Trump fired five IGs over a span of six weeks in 2020.

"Trump's Friday night coup to overthrow legally protected independent Inspectors General is an attack on transparency and accountability, essential ingredients in our democratic form of government," said Connolly, top Democrat on the House Oversight Committee, in a statement.

"Replacing independent Inspectors General with political hacks will harm every American who relies on Social Security, veterans benefits and a fair hearing at IRS on refunds and audits."

Trump said he'd lower prices, instead he's doing corporate tax giveaways

By Lindsay Owens

President Trump is back in office, and his Republican allies in Congress are already hard at work readying his legislative agenda.

Trump campaigned on a promise to lower costs for Americans. But so far, the GOP hasn't proposed a single plan to do that. Instead, Republicans are sitting back while the president trashes the constitution, and laying the groundwork, by means of illegal cuts, for a round of massive tax breaks for the ultra-wealthy and corporations.

It's shaping up to be far worse than what Trump did the first time around, in 2017.

Trump made a lot of promises on the campaign trail in 2016, too—and quickly broke most of them. But he did fulfill one: His 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, his only signature legislative accomplishment, was a field day for the oligarchs and CEOs who helped elect him. This time, going beyond what he did in 2017, he has plunged the country into a constitutional crisis as he makes available money for another huge tax cut for the rich.

The tax cuts he enacted in 2017 were, of course, bad enough. The tax cut for the richest 0.1 percent of Americans was 277 times larger than the one teachers and firefighters got, nearly doubling billionaire wealth in this country and spiking inequality.

Meanwhile, corporations got a 40% discount on their taxes, which they used to send record stock buybacks to their wealthy shareholders and pad their profits while they overcharged consumers on everything from gas to groceries.

The bill never delivered the wage gains or economic growth Trump promised. But it did add \$1.9 trillion to the deficit.

Key provisions of this tax scam expire next year. That would be welcome news for the vast majority of Americans, who are sick and tired of tax cuts for the wealthy. But Trump and his Republican colleagues are readying a supersized set of high-end tax breaks that would make his 2017 legislation look like child's play.

Republicans plan to give the richest Americans a fresh round of individual tax breaks, slash the corporate tax rate yet again, and cut taxes on capital gains and dividends, which would let their Wall Street friends keep even more of their winnings when they sell a stock or are showered with dividends.

Step one is what he did yesterday, illegally freezing federal funding of almost everything that Congress has made into law.

GOP leaders will point to falling revenues from their own tax cuts as evidence for the need to cut spending on life-saving programs that families rely on, like Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which helps more than 42 million families afford their groceries. Trump shocked the nation, if that is any longer possible for even him to do, by freezing federal spending yesterday. The Medicaid and Veterans Benefits portals went dead. Firestorms of protest erupted across the nation.

In fact, Trump has put an unelected and unaccountable billionaire—Elon Musk—in charge of the "Department of Government Efficiency" (DOGE) to decide on even more painful cuts we'll have to face. And surprise, surprise, as we saw yesterday, they're almost exclusively targeting programs that help working people, veterans, students, families, and other non-billionaires.

If Trump and the GOP get their way, we know exactly what to expect: Income inequality will worsen, crucial government programs will be starved, and corporations and the ultra-wealthy will amass even more outsized power over our economy and democracy.

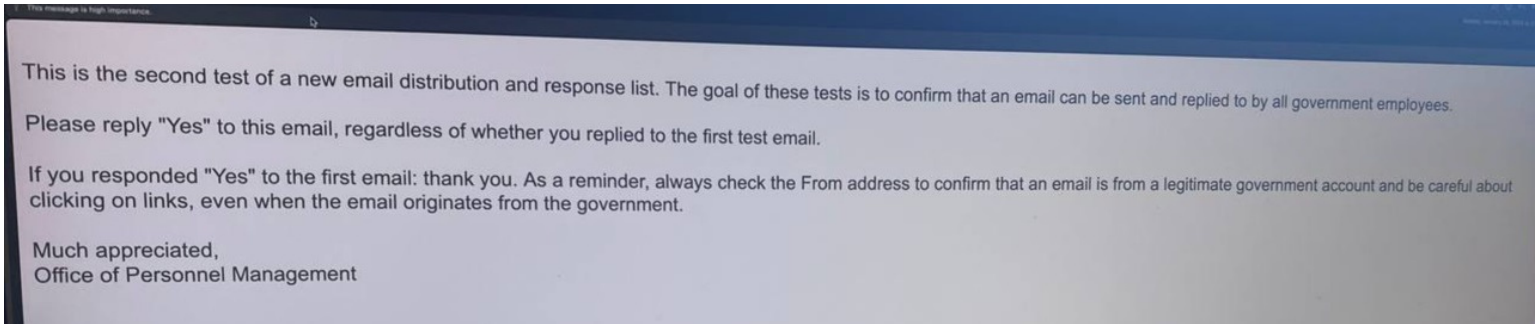
But we can learn something else from our experiences with Trump: Masses of people united in their opposition to Trump's tax cuts for the wealthy, pushing Trump's approval rating to the lowest point in his presidency and ousting supporters of his corporate tax cuts in the next year's midterms.

Tax giveaways for the wealthy and corporations were deeply unpopular with voters in 2018—and that's only intensified after this recent wave of corporate price gouging that has squeezed American families. Democratic lawmakers must make it as difficult as possible to enact this next tax giveaway.

This year, we need to make sure every single member of Congress understands that supporting Trump's tax plans means turning their backs on working Americans.

How Trump power grab is inflicting havoc on a nation

By Taryn Fivek



“Move fast and break things” is a Silicon Valley adage used to describe the ethos of self-described “disruptors” who do business by skirting regulatory and legal safeguards while causing chaos and uncertainty for regulators, investors and workers alike. With Donald Trump’s second term underway, ushered in by dozens of tech oligarchs and billionaires, this management strategy has finally reached the halls of federal government, with predictable results.

A source exclusive to *People’s World* received their first email from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in the early morning hours of January 24th. The subject heading was “Email test” and it was a simple enough message:

“This is a test of a new distribution and response list. Please reply YES to this message.”

Given the strange message and hours, the source decided not to respond or click the link titled “Office of Personnel Management – Announcement” below the message.

The second email arrived on Sunday afternoon with the subject heading “Second Email Test” and its message was as follows:

“This is the second test of a new email distribution and response list. The goal of these tests is to confirm that an email can be sent and replied to by all government employees.

Please reply “Yes” to this email, regardless of whether you replied to the first test email.

If you responded to “Yes” to the first email: thank you. As a reminder, always always check the From address to confirm that an email is from a legitimate government account and be careful about clicking on links, even when the email originates from the government.

Much appreciated,

Office of Personnel Management”

“The test emails seemed like incompetence and a way to surveil and harass federal workers directly without going through the chain of command,” the source told People’s World. “My general inclination was to not comply unless it was through my chain of command.”

None of these mysterious emails, originating from HR@opm.gov, were sent from a secure address and were unsigned.

None of these mysterious emails, originating from HR@opm.gov, were sent from a secure address and were unsigned.

Yet, the next email, sent on Thursday, seemed even more stunning in its boldness. Received on Tuesday evening, it offered a so-called “Deferred Resignation Program” that claimed to dangle a “dignified, fair departure” to millions of federal workers if they did not offer full loyalty to Trump’s new administration.

With the subject line “Fork in the Road” the email promised a “reformed federal workforce” built around four pillars:

1. **Return to Office:** *The substantial majority of federal employees who have been working remotely since Covid will be required to return to their physical offices five days a week. Going forward, we also expect our physical offices to undergo meaningful consolidation and divestitures, potentially resulting in physical office relocations for a number of federal workers.*
2. **Performance culture:** *The federal workforce should be comprised of the best America has to offer. We will insist on excellence at every level — our performance standards will be updated to reward and promote those that exceed expectations and address in a fair and open way those who do not meet the high standards which the taxpayers of this country have a right to demand.*
3. **More streamlined and flexible workforce:** *While a few agencies and even branches of the military are likely to see increases in the size of their workforce, the majority of federal agencies are likely to be downsized through restructurings, realignments, and reductions in force. These actions are likely to include the use of furloughs and the reclassification to at-will status for a substantial number of federal employees.*
4. **Enhanced standards of conduct:** *The federal workforce should be comprised of employees who are reliable, loyal, trustworthy, and who strive for excellence in their daily work. Employees will be subject to enhanced standards of suitability and conduct as we move forward. Employees who engage in unlawful behavior or other misconduct will be prioritized for appropriate investigation and discipline, including termination.*

The conclusion? If the worker can’t hack it, then they should resign by replying to the email with the word “Resign” in the body of the email.

If you resign under this program, you will retain all pay and benefits regardless of your daily workload and will be exempted from all applicable in-person work requirements until September 30, 2025 (or earlier if you choose to accelerate your resignation for any reason). The details of this separation plan can be found below.

How Trump power grab is inflicting havoc on a nation

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If this strange offer sounds familiar, that's because its language and approach originate from Elon Musk's disastrous 2022 takeover of Twitter, an acquisition that catapulted the billionaire to the front pages as he opened the gates to previously banned neo-Nazis, racists, transphobes, misogynists and insurrectionists – including Donald Trump himself.

He also cut more than 75% of the Twitter workforce in three stages, one of which was a similar ultimatum delivered by email in November 2022, identically titled: "A fork in the road." In it, he offered employees a severance package of three months pay if they could not commit to being "extremely hardcore" and "working long hours at high intensity."

Biographer Walter Isaacson says that Musk himself "did it not only for cost reasons. He preferred a scrappy, hard-driven environment where rabid warriors felt psychological danger rather than comfort."

While the authorship of the January 28th OPM email is still anonymous, what is known is that Musk has staffed the Office of Personnel Management with acolytes whose only real qualification seems to be their unwavering loyalty to Elon Musk.

The tech publication WIRED reported that among the new staffers are Amanda Scales, Riccardo Biasini, and Steve Davis, all of them executives whose most recent experience is reporting directly to Elon Musk at Tesla, xAI, and Twitter. Also on senior OPM staff are a 21-year-old senior advisor whose previous experience was with Peter Thiel's Palantir, as well as a recent high school graduate whose previous experience includes camp counselor and summer intern at Neuralink.

Additionally, the new General Counsel for OPM is Andrew Kostler, a former Matt Gaetz staffer who once commented on a [blog post](#) on bestiality laws in Germany that "consent is probably modern society's most pernicious fetish" and, as recently [as 2023](#), publicly posted that he needed "a woman who looks like she just got punched." In 2022, he was subject to a temporary restraining order on domestic violence charges in Maryland, and was also booked in Collin County, Texas that same year on additional domestic violence charges, and in 2022 in Travis County, Texas for driving under the influence.

As if this parade of horrors weren't enough, the proposed "Deferred Resignation Program" seems about as shaky as Elon Musk's first "fork in the road" email to Twitter workers back in 2022. Elon Musk offered similar "buyouts" to Twitter employees, but then reneged on the deal, and the \$500 million suit brought by former workers was dismissed in June of last year, leaving them empty handed.

Likewise, in an email to their membership, the American Federation of Government Employees advised federal workers who received this week's email to not "resign or respond" until they receive further information from their union as even if the program was "interpreted as an implied contract or offer, there is no guarantee that such a claim would be enforceable."

If not legal and not enforceable, then what is the strategy for Trump, Musk and their army of misogynists, racists, and yes-men?

Vice President J.D. Vance offered insight when he appeared on Jack Murphy's video livestream in 2021: "I think that what Trump should do, if I was giving him one piece of advice, [is] fire every single mid-level bureaucrat, every civil servant in the administrative state, replace them with our people... and when the courts stop you, stand before the country like Andrew Jackson did, and say 'the Chief Justice has made his ruling – now let him enforce it.'"

Costco keeps diversity policies, but workers know a union contract is the best DEI

By Cameron Harrison and Dom Shannon



The decision by Costco to maintain its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies, in light of Big Business' onslaught on affirmative action and the Trump administration's recent [executive orders](#) against federal diversity programs, has been seen as a positive development among many in the civil rights and democratic movements.

Corporations including Meta, Target, Walmart, and others are quickly abandoning their DEI policies—with Meta [going so far](#) as to, in the words of CEO Mark Zuckerberg, “get rid of a bunch of restrictions on topics like immigration and gender that are just out of touch with mainstream discourse.”

Among the MAGA right, Costco's decision to go against the tide of corporate diversity rollbacks is drawing ire and leading to [calls for a boycott](#) of the warehouse retail chain.

Some civil rights organizations are jumping to the company's defense. The National Action Network, led by Rev. Al Sharpton, [held](#) a “Buy In” at a Costco store in East Harlem on Jan. 25 with around 100 people—a show of support for Costco's decision. Similar events are planned at Costco stores across the country.

At the same time that the mega-retailer is being praised for its DEI decision, however, its workers are preparing for [a possible national strike](#). They're fighting to protect their right to unionize, win overdue raises from a company swimming in profits, and block a load of unfair labor practices.

The situation is rife with apparent contradictions: Some progressives are cheering for Costco while simultaneously the people who work there are fighting back against exploitation.

But there's no need to categorize Costco as an ally or adversary; labor and progressives can support both the struggle for equality and the fight of Costco workers for better wages and respect on the job.

Attacking equality under the guise of “equality”

The explosion of controversy over DEI in the corporate world and government might seem to have appeared out of nowhere, but the reaction has actually been waging its counter-offensive for a while now.

Following the Supreme Court's decision in 2023 to [overturn affirmative action](#) in higher education, the right has since launched a legal assault on DEI initiatives in the workplace as well as sought to eliminate [African-American Studies](#) and [Gender Studies](#) in publicly funded education institutions.

Speaking on the decision at the time, dissenting Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor said: “The court cements a superficial rule of colorblindness as a constitutional principle in an endemically segregated society where race has always mattered and continues to matter.”

Under the latest Trump executive orders, federal workers are now mandated to report any coworkers they suspect are secretly advancing DEI initiatives. Workers have received emails warning of potential consequences if they fail to report any coworkers still implementing DEI measures.

Strike For All, an organization founded by former Ohio State Rep. Nina Tuner, plans to call for boycotts on corporations that monetarily support and lobby for policies that hurt working-class Americans. Their first [boycott campaign](#) is against Target over its elimination of DEI policies and its decision to terminate the initiative of trying to stock their shelves with products from Black-owned small businesses.

The right's effort to abolish DEI policies is an aspect of the broader “culture wars” which have stretched for decades but returned with a vengeance after 2020. Reactionary targeting operations arose as a response to the Black Lives Matter protests that followed the police murder of George Floyd.

The right argues that DEI promotes preferences for oppressed groups and disparages it as “reverse discrimination” against white Americans, particularly white men. Billionaire Elon Musk, now a prominent voice in the Trump administration and for [international fascism](#), alleges that DEI is “watering down hiring standards.”

America First Legal, a fascistic non-profit organization led by Stephen Miller, the White House deputy chief of staff for policy, has filed [multiple lawsuits](#) against companies for their alleged “DEI efforts.”

The Trump administration's attack on DEI is ultimately a cover for eliminating the anti-discrimination enforcement powers of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. This would enable employers to practice racist and sexist job discrimination in hiring, wages, promotions, and working conditions.

Costco faces possible strike, unfair labor practices

So, how does the Costco labor dispute fit into all this? Like the right's effort to abolish diversity policies, the fight of Costco workers also didn't just pop up this week. Employees there have been engaged in a struggle against corporate management for months before DEI prompted MAGA to put a target on the company.

The company is facing [several unfair labor practice charges](#) brought by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. The union says the company is violating federal labor law and their national master agreement in a “calculated effort to undermine workers' rights and disrupt the collective bargaining process.”

The Teamsters' current contract with Costco ends Jan. 31. It covers 18,000 workers across the country. The Teamsters suspended negotiations in August of last year after Costco refused to support workers' legal right to unionize by agreeing to a card-check process. The card-check process makes it easier for non-union workers to join the union without facing threats or interference.

Costco is the 11th largest U.S. corporation. It reported \$242 billion in revenue and \$29.7 billion in annual gross profits in 2023. In negotiations with the Teamsters, Costco has proposed raises of less than 4%, with just \$1 in the first year of a new contract. That's not even enough to buy a Costco hot dog!

“If the workers do walk out on strike Jan. 31, honoring the picket lines will be the most effective way supporters of equality can support that goal,” Joe Henry, a former Teamster leader of the 1997 UPS strike, told People's World. “Real equality on the job starts with a strong union contract and workers having a say in our workplaces.”

Cementing equality into policy and law

While the mainstream media's non-stop drumbeat of outrage and division is prompting many to pick a side and praise Costco, what the Teamsters workers there know is that equal treatment and wages on the job is not a gift from management or government—it's something fought for and won in struggle.

In the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement scored major advances in addressing systemic inequality, racism, and sexism, such as Executive Order 11246 issued by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Signed in 1965, the order prohibited employment discrimination based on “race, color, religion, sex, and national origin by organizations receiving federal contracts and subcontracts.”

Affirmative action utilizes the state's power to force employers to implement the necessary changes. The Civil Rights Movement and labor fought for, and supported, these efforts and considered them necessary in the fight for unity against white supremacy and Big Business' corporate greed.

The late Gus Hall, former General Secretary of the Communist Party USA, said that "the struggle against inequality is a basic class question simply because not all members of our class live and work under conditions of equality." Concretely, Hall said, this meant the working class had to fight for affirmative action policies and eliminate the racist wage gaps and hiring practices common in the workplace. It meant winning and protecting the right of all workers to join a union and bargain collectively.

And that brings us back to corporate DEI. In contrast to public policy instituting affirmative action, these private sector initiatives are oftentimes self-regulation or even marketing measures by corporations—symbolic gestures that substitute for substantive action.

The notion that most of the moguls of Big Business have any genuine interest in combating racism and sexism is highly suspect. The speed with which so many companies have thrown their diversity handbooks overboard once Trump gave the green light has proven that. Looking at the big picture, the greater the division and competition within the working class, the more feasible it becomes to exploit all workers at a higher rate and increase corporate profits.

Anything established by management that can be eliminated at their discretion is not an effective means of monitoring bosses and ensuring the enforcement of equality practices. For instance, Costco is not legally bound by its DEI policy, but it is bound by the Teamsters Union contract—which could have special equality policies negotiated into it.

In a similar recent [example](#), the non-profit organization Big Green appointed a select group of workers to a "DEI Council" tasked with ensuring accountability in matters of diversity and inclusion.

Despite its supposed intentions behind establishing the DEI Council, Big Green's management vehemently opposed the critiques of the very body they set up. Instead of implementing recommended changes, bosses initiated a retaliation and intimidation campaign against the workers.

Eventually, the Communication Workers of America union intervened and filed unfair labor practice charges on behalf of the targeted workers. Since the workers' statement was a "concerted expression of their concerns about their employment terms and conditions," the CWA was able to leverage labor law to prevent Big Green's retaliation campaign.

"A union contract is the best form of DEI"

Pam Powell, a member of Detroit UAW Local 600 and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, told *People's World*, "A strong union contract offers the protections necessary to give workers a genuine voice on DEI policies for which companies cannot or will not."

That way, she said, equality measures can be structurally enforced without relying on the whims of management. Equality guarantees cemented in union contracts can win equal pay for equal work, fair standards for promotion and benefits, and promote equity in hiring practices.

Ultimately, equality measures shouldn't be left up to company promises; they should be enshrined in the union contract and written into law—just like affirmative action policies were in the past.

Costco has more than enough money to maintain its DEI policies and expand them, while also giving fair wage increases, improving working conditions, and honoring the rights of workers to organize collectively.

The situation isn't either/or. It's a case of the company needing to put its money where its mouth is and honor a fair contract for its workers while ALSO maintaining special measures to promote diversity and equality.

Judge temporarily blocks Trump's unconstitutional freeze of programs initiated by Congress

By John Wojcik and Associated Press

WASHINGTON – A federal judge late yesterday temporarily blocked a wave of illegal shutdowns of congressionally funded programs covering almost all aspects of life in the U.S. Lawmakers, including senators and House members, declared that his actions had plunged the country into a constitutional crisis.

All the programs he froze were set up by acts of Congress. The actions proved once again that Trump is willing to do anything, including trash the Constitution, to establish his own dictatorial power. The actions resulted in a firestorm of opposition even before the court ruling temporarily blocking the action.

The AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler issued the following statement:

"The Trump administration's move to freeze federal funding is unprecedented and illegal and will immediately harm working families across this country. The Office of Management and Budget's memo indicates that essential programs will stop operating as soon as 5 p.m. Tuesday, including food assistance for people living in poverty; shelter for homeless veterans; health care for babies and nursing homes for seniors with Medicaid; Head Start preschool programs for children; rent assistance and support for low-income families to heat their homes; fire response and disaster relief for people who have lost everything; and state workplace safety programs for workers on the job. The administration's move also pauses funding for infrastructure and manufacturing projects, throwing tens of thousands of good union jobs into jeopardy.

Judge temporarily blocks Trump's unconstitutional freeze of programs initiated by Congress

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"This is about our livelihoods, our families and our communities, all of which are at risk with this freeze. It's also about our money—those programs are funded by taxpayers and appropriated by our elected representatives in Congress.

"The Constitution prohibits the president from blocking that money, no matter what a bunch of out-of-touch billionaire CEOs and the authors of Project 2025 may think. We urge President Trump and his administration to reverse this decision immediately, before the very working people he claims to care about are hurt the most.

The order capped the most chaotic day for the U.S. government since Trump returned to office, with uncertainty over a crucial financial lifeline causing panic and confusion among states, schools and organizations that rely on trillions of dollars from Washington.

U.S. District Judge Loren L. Ali Khan blocked the funding freeze only minutes before it was scheduled to take effect. The administrative stay, prompted by a lawsuit brought by nonprofit groups that receive federal money, lasts until Monday afternoon. Another court hearing is scheduled that morning to consider the issue.

Democrats argued that the president had no right to unilaterally stop spending money appropriated by Congress. Just minutes after Ali Khan made her ruling, Democratic attorneys general from 22 states and the District of Columbia filed their own lawsuit seeking to block and permanently prevent the administration from cutting off federal funding.

Democratic senators described panicked calls coming overnight from communities back home afraid of what will happen to programs for children, seniors, public works and disease research as the Trump administration pauses federal funding for review.

"There is no question this policy is reckless, dangerous, illegal and unconstitutional," New York Attorney General Letitia James said.

Backing off somewhat later in the day, Trump administration officials said programs that provide direct assistance to Americans would not be affected, such as Medicare, Social Security, student loans and food stamps. But they sometimes struggled to provide a clear picture.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt initially would not say whether Medicaid was exempted from the freeze, but the administration later claimed that it was.

Memos sent out by the Trump administration exposed the raw right-wing ideological bent of his attacks on the standard of living of Americans.

"The use of Federal resources to advance Marxist equity, transgenderism, and green new deal social engineering policies is a waste of taxpayer dollars that does not improve the day-to-day lives of those we serve," wrote Matthew Vaeth, the acting director of the Office of Management and Budget, in a memo distributed Monday.

Vaeth wrote that "each agency must complete a comprehensive analysis of all of their Federal financial assistance programs to identify programs, projects, and activities that may be implicated by any of the President's executive orders." He also wrote that the freeze should be implemented "to the extent permissible under applicable law."

The freeze on grants and loans was scheduled to take effect at 5 p.m. EST, just one day after agencies were informed of the decision.

Leavitt, who held [her first White House briefing](#) on Tuesday, said the administration was trying to be "good stewards" of public money by making sure that there was "no more funding for transgenderism and wokeness."

Fears about interruption in government services were exacerbated as states reported problems with the Medicaid funding portal, where officials request reimbursement for providing healthcare to poor residents.

'Punished for Dreaming' is a needed read on how school reform harms Black children

By Emma Glazer

Bettina L. Love's *Punished for Dreaming: How School Reform Harms Black Children and How We Heal* is a necessary read for all teachers and public education advocates. In fact, as we enter a second Trump administration and Republican-dominated government, we should consider our role as public education advocates.

The book, published in 2023, asks: "What is owed to Black children and their families who have been educated in a violent system that is dedicated to their deprivation?" As a response, Love calls for educational reparations. In each chapter, she details the harm Black children have suffered as a result of reforms.

At times, this may be in the backlash to a reform meant to improve access to education—such as the "educational white rage" in response to integration policies. Other times, the harm is through the half-baked nature of solutions that do not adequately challenge the hierarchy of racial capitalism and, therefore, reinforce inequality even through attempts at educational improvement.

The reforms Love refers to are not exclusively within the field of education. Others relate to housing or incarceration. She lists: "the gutting of cities through racial zoning laws, subsidies for building all-white suburbs, tax exemptions for white people to build their own private schools, white people calling for school choice when the choices are not good enough for their own children...."

Housing is intertwined deeply with educational outcomes through the interrelationship of taxes and educational funding, as well as the stress of housing insecurity on a student's educational experiences. The last of the reforms listed above—school choice—is one of the educational priorities of the incoming administration. It is important to see it within the context Love provides as a reform with impacts that further pull resources for education away from Black students.

When presenting the relationship between incarceration and schools, Love chooses not to name it as a school-to-prison pipeline but instead to call out how "All Black life regardless of the setting is susceptible to incarceration, punishment, disposability, testing, and being branded a threat by the state."

She continues on to list: “Driving is carceral—Sandra Bland, sleeping is carceral—Breonna Taylor, shopping is carceral—George Floyd, playing in the park is carceral—Tamir Rice....”

Through naming the unjust murders of Black individuals, Love reminds the reader that the struggle for educational equity is inseparable from fighting anti-Black violence and incarceration. As we know from the past eight years of struggle, Trump empowers white nationalists and white supremacists. It is ever important to understand how the issues of anti-Black violence and incarceration are issues that affect Black students in all settings and must be considered as top concerns by educators.

With Love’s analysis of the harms of reforms, it could be confusing to understand where to go from here. However, her vision for “educational reparations” emerges from the need for policies “that will atone for the centuries during which Black people have endured disparities in wealth, income, education, health, sentencing and incarceration, political participation and subsequent opportunities to engage in American political and social life.”

She refers to Martin Luther King Jr. in her understanding of the importance of reforms, writing:

“In 1965, Dr. King delivered rousing speeches calling for the end of old man segregation and the social systems that maintain white supremacy. In his addresses to crowds of thousands, he said: ‘It may be true that the law can’t change the heart, but it can restrain the heartless.’”

As we enter a Trump administration dominated by strong right-wing forces, where it can be guaranteed that “educational white rage” will be in effect, it is ever more important to understand the political need to fight for all powers to “restrain the heartless.”

As we consider the role of educators in the incoming administration, we must double down on our seriousness as public education advocates. Whatever struggle is in store—whether it be for affordable housing, lowering incarceration, fighting against school choice as a strategy for weakening public education, or saving the Department of Education, it is important to understand each of these struggles as fighting toward educational reparations for Black students.

To look at the fight of educators in the upcoming administration and not call out specifically the harm that a Trump administration will cause to Black students is shameful.

Connecticut CP renewed by the People’s March

By Mariano Rivera and Waleed Ahmad

When the People’s March was announced for January 18th, 2025, the Communist Party USA immediately mobilized all districts to join the already strong contingent in D.C. The march would cap the strong, 60-day response to Trump’s election victory, which focused on strengthening our coalitions and building a united front against his fascist agenda. It would be a show of strength against Trump and the MAGA movement’s threat of mass deportations, attacks on civil, labor, and reproductive rights. We would stand with over a hundred working class organizations and parties who have been involved in the struggle for freedom, democracy, and equality.

The Connecticut contingent grew slowly at first, but as soon as a few volunteers had given it roots, it grew quickly. In the end, 21 adults and two toddlers, mostly Communist Party and Young Communist League (YCL) members, but also a few party allies, were on the train to the march. Donations from all across the state flew in to support the group, including various clubs and many party members who themselves could not go. So the group became more than the sum of its parts as it was carried by the spirit and enthusiasm of the entire state party.

On the train to D.C., curious bystanders and fellow passengers, noticing the Connecticut Communist Party stickers our group was wearing, asked us questions and engaged with us on the topic of resisting Trump and building democracy and socialism. In the concrete cavern of the D.C. metro at union station, a very kind and friendly worker helped us with directions. She said she would have joined the march if she wasn’t working, but she would participate by helping people get there.

The morning of the march was grey, cold, and damp. That, however, did not reflect the mood inside D.C. There was a certain excitement flowing through the city, as we could see people walking toward the metro stations, wearing pink hats, some carrying banners. The Connecticut contingent met up for a final meeting before the march, reaffirming the importance of this event in our work, the importance of discipline and safety, especially with the ever-present threat of right-wing violence. Then, we were off to Farragut Square where our Communist Party contingent would meet and where the march would kick off.

The march, which according to organizers was over 50,000 strong, felt like a repudiation of what January 6th represented. When Trump and his cronies lost the election, they called on their fascist militias to try to overthrow the government in a violent coup.

The people lost this election, but we chose the path of democracy and building a mass movement to bring about the change we want to see. This event did not reach the heights of the Women’s March eight years ago when half a million people descended on Washington, but this feels like a more mature, more intersectional, and more united movement, made up of serious organizers and activists, who better understand what it takes to defeat the far right. The march brought together a very diverse group of people and tied together diverse causes with a common thread of building people power against Trump’s corporate agenda. It was especially encouraging how visible the Palestine cause was. Peace was one of the big issues of the day.

This was the theme of the rally at the reflecting pool of the Lincoln Memorial where the march ended. Speakers at the rally included Ben Jealous, former President of the NAACP and current Executive Director of the Sierra Club, who spoke about the fight for a greener and healthier Mother Earth. The march revealed a growing melding of climate change and environmental activism with the anti-war peace movement as we fight to live in healthy, sustained communities.

Beth Miller, Political Director of Jewish Voice for Peace spoke about joining the march with the Palestinian freedom movement within the broader anti-war contingent to make clear that all of our liberations — from the U.S. to Palestine and everywhere in between — are connected, and that facism both at home and abroad requires a big broad united front.

Analilia Mejia, co-executive Director of the Center for Popular Democracy, warned against apathy in the face of defeat, reminding attendees that freedom and justice is not a final destination, but a practice that requires us to wake up everyday and make a decision to either uphold democracy and a government for the people or sit it out altogether. Several speakers called on members of Congress to demonstrate the same level of courage that our communities have long demonstrated in the global fight for justice and liberation.

The election did not go our way, and we have to reckon with that. But the work that was done to build coalitions, to build unity against the power of the capitalist class, has not dissolved into nothingness. It’s still there and at the march it was palpable. Our contingent also came away with a renewed sense of purpose and comradeship that comes from accomplishing something together. We were proud to have made this trip a success for the Connecticut district and the national party.

Israeli troops kill two and wound 17 in southern Lebanon

By Morning Star

Israeli troops have killed two people and wounded 17 in southern Lebanon during protests against their continued occupation of the area.

Monday's killings occurred the day after 24 people died and more than 130 wounded when Israeli soldiers opened fire on protesters who had breached roadblocks set up along the border.

Under the terms of a U.S.-brokered ceasefire that took effect on November 27, Israeli forces were supposed to withdraw from southern Lebanon, while Hezbollah resistance fighters were to move north of the Litani river by Sunday.

The Lebanese army and United Nations peacekeepers deployed in several villages before the deadline, but Israeli troops remained in over a dozen villages.

The U.S. and Lebanon announced later on Sunday that the deadline for meeting the ceasefire terms had been extended to February 18.

In a pre-recorded speech broadcast on Monday, Hezbollah leader Naim Kassem said his group would not accept the extension of the ceasefire deadline, without addressing the fact that the Lebanese government had already done so.

"Israel has to withdraw because the 60 days are over," Mr. Kassem said. "We won't accept any excuses to extend one second or one day."

"Any delay in the withdrawal is the responsibility of the UN, the U.S., France, and Israel."

Mr. Kassem also said his group had not violated the ceasefire terms and acknowledged that it had considered retaliating against Israeli air strikes but had been advised not to by the Lebanese authorities.

Many people entering border villages on Sunday discovered the bodies of their relatives. Israeli strikes have killed over 4,000 people during the war, but the Lebanese authorities do not distinguish between fighters and civilians in their death toll.

Since the ceasefire began, Israel has conducted near-daily operations such as house demolitions, shelling and air strikes in southern Lebanon, accusing Hezbollah of violating ceasefire terms by attempting to move weapons.

Lebanon has, in turn, accused Israel of hundreds of ceasefire violations.

Trump minimiza epidemia de gripe aviar mientras precios de huevos se disparan

By Taryn Fivek

Uno de los primeros impactos observables de la nueva administración Trump es el ataque de la administración a la información pública. Las comunicaciones de las agencias están amordazadas, se alienta a los trabajadores federales a delatarse entre sí sobre las reducciones de DEI, las investigaciones están selladas y se nos dice que, de alguna manera, Pete Hegseth está calificado para dirigir el Departamento de Defensa. Sin embargo, en ninguna parte se puede ver mejor este ataque a la información pública que en el precio de los huevos.

La Oficina de Estadísticas Laborales, que lleva un registro de los precios y registra la inflación, señaló un aumento promedio del 3,2% en el precio de los huevos en diciembre de 2024. Las cifras de este mes aún no se han publicado, pero recibir una bofetada en la cara con etiquetas de precios de huevos que alcanzan hasta \$17 por docena en Brooklyn es alucinante.

Según la representante Rashida Tlaib de Detroit, los huevos en Detroit cuestan \$10 la docena. Las investigaciones telefónicas realizadas por People's World en los mercados de Nueva York, Chicago, Detroit y Birmingham arrojaron precios que no bajaron de los 5 dólares por una docena de huevos blancos grandes. El aumento interanual de los huevos es ahora del 37%, y se espera que los precios se disparen un 20% más en el primer trimestre de 2025.

La campaña Trump-Vance hizo mucho ruido sobre la inflación, y los analistas, que se apresuran a pasar por alto cuestiones como la xenofobia, Gaza, la misoginia y el racismo, han insistido durante mucho tiempo en que la campaña de Harris-Walz perdió las elecciones de 2024 debido a problemas relacionados con el coste de la vida, en primer lugar la inflación. Estos analistas insisten en que fue el fracaso de la administración Biden a la hora de reducir los precios, incluido el coste de los huevos, lo que le costó la elección a su vicepresidente.

Silencio sobre el costo de vida

Ahora que su administración ha sido asegurada, tanto Trump como Vance han guardado silencio sobre el costo de vida. El vicepresidente Vance admitió a CBS el sábado por la noche que, a pesar de ser un tema de campaña importante, "va a tomar un poco de tiempo" para que los precios bajen.

En diciembre, Trump dijo a los periodistas que, en cuanto al precio de los alimentos, "es difícil bajar [los precios] una vez que suben. Ya saben, es muy difícil".

En una entrevista con People's World, el Dr. David Anderson, del Departamento de Economía Agrícola de Texas A&M, fue directo al grano. "Los huevos ciertamente se han disparado en precio. El mayor problema es el impacto de la HPAI (influenza aviar altamente patógena). Eso ha reducido nuestra cantidad de gallinas ponedoras y suministros de huevos. En su mayor parte, todavía tenemos huevos en los estantes, aunque no había muchos en mi tienda local este fin de semana".

La influenza aviar de alta patogenicidad, que se presenta generalmente como su cepa H5N1, es altamente transmisible y extremadamente mortal. Una infección puede propagarse rápidamente, acabando con granjas enteras en el lapso de apenas unos días. A diferencia del brote de gripe aviar de 2014-2015, en el que se sacrificaron 50 millones de aves para "erradicar" la enfermedad, en los últimos dos años, más de 137 millones de aves en los Estados Unidos han sido sacrificadas para evitar su propagación, devastando a los pequeños agricultores.

Con el aumento de los precios y la escasez cada vez más común en los estantes de los supermercados, expertos como el Dr. Anderson no ven una solución a corto plazo en el futuro. "Se necesitan aproximadamente 25 semanas para que la pollita [una gallina joven] alcance el tamaño maduro para comenzar a poner huevos", dijo a People's World. "Creo que es realmente un juego de espera... Creo que el gobierno podría hacer algunas cosas para ayudar a trabajar contra la IAAP, como financiar la investigación sobre vacunas, [y] crear un suministro de vacunas para uso futuro".

Además, con la orden de censura de Trump sobre las agencias federales de salud, los consumidores enfrentan una amenaza mayor que el precio de los huevos. Si bien la falta de aviso de salud pública puede no afectar tanto la factura de la compra como los problemas de suministro y las empresas codiciosas que se dedican a especular con los precios, "si [la IAAP] mutara a una forma virulenta que fuera realmente mala para las personas y se propagara fácilmente, la falta de comunicación obstaculizaría el flujo de información a las personas y a los médicos para permitirnos responder más rápido", advirtió el Dr. Anderson.

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