

Organizations step up to help laid-off federal employees

Since January, the Trump administration has taken unprecedented steps to decrease the number of federal employees, including through buyouts, the dismissal of probationary employees and reductions-in-force plans from all federal agencies.

According to *The New York Times*, as of May 5, there were 58,566 confirmed job cuts, 76,100 workers who took federal buyouts and a planned reduction of an additional 149,320 workers. In total, the Trump administration plans to reduce the 2.4-million-person civilian federal workforce by at least 12 percent.

The administration reportedly has nearly eliminated some federal agencies altogether and plans to do the same to others, with some of those actions having been blocked by federal judges. Some government agencies have cut their workforce by more than 99 percent, such as the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and the U.S. Agency for International Development, while others have been cut by less than 1 percent, including the Central Intelligence Agency and the Transportation Security Administration.

Behind the numbers are the people facing the reality of being laid off. Because so many federal workers have been laid off during the same time frame, it has become difficult to find new employment.

The Washington, DC, region—including DC, Maryland and Virginia—is home to 556,000 federal workers, according to the Economic Policy Institute. So, local agencies are using their resources to help those hurt by the job cuts. Federal and local government agencies, as well as other organizations, have stepped up to provide services to help.



The Office of Personnel Management's Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan is providing priority placement for eligible federal workers who are seeking new positions after they were displaced. For those who are concerned about losing their homes, the Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking has a foreclosure mediation program that brings homeowners and lenders together to try to find solutions.

For federal workers who reside in the District of Columbia, the city's Department of Employment Services is offering career counseling, resume assistance, job placement services and training programs through its American Job Centers. Laid-off federal workers living in DC also are eligible for unemployment benefits, health insurance, student loan assistance and financial support.

Additionally, several local organizations have hosted job fairs for laid-off workers.

The Metropolitan Washington Council of the AFL-CIO, through the Community Services Agency (CSA), coordinates local DC labor unions' efforts to provide support for the families and the community in the DC area. The

organization created a Federal Worker Solidarity Fund to assist federal workers who are experiencing financial effects from losing their jobs. The federal workers fund covers up to \$500 for one-time emergency financial needs.

The Federal Workers Legal Defense Network (FWLDN) was formed to provide pro bono attorneys to federal workers who have "had their basic rights violated on the job—including tens of thousands who have been fired illegally," as stated on its website. Its lawyers speak with federal workers to inform them about employment rights and wrongful termination.

The nonprofit Federal Employee Education & Assistance (FEEA) Fund provides federal employees who have been laid off with up to \$2,000 in loans to assist those who are now unemployed. Although it is a loan, the nonprofit is working to raise funds for partial loan forgiveness.

If you want to assist laid-off federal workers, you can make a contribution to FEEA at feea.org, to the FWLDN at workerslegaldefense.org, to the AFL-CIO's Metro Washington Council's CSA at communityservicesagency.org/assistance, or several other organizations. **PR**