

# Trump Is Said to Be Preparing Order That Aims to Eliminate Education Dept.

Without Congress, President Trump cannot dismantle the agency. No modern president has ever tried to unilaterally shut down a federal department.



**By Michael C. Bender**  
Reporting from Washington

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President Trump is preparing to sign an order that would instruct Education Secretary Linda McMahon to begin dismantling her agency, setting the stage for a potential power struggle with Congress and another round of legal challenges from opponents.

An administration official said the order could be signed as soon as Thursday. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to speak about private deliberations. Hours later, Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, said in a social media post that Mr. Trump would not be signing any orders related to the Education Department on Thursday.

No modern president has ever tried to unilaterally shut down a federal department. The Education Department was created by an act of Congress in 1979, and federal lawmakers would likely have to approve eliminating it.

Mr. Trump's order was expected to lead to another legal fight for the administration, which is already embroiled in multiple lawsuits over actions in its first six weeks.

The American Federation of Teachers noted in a statement late Wednesday that the Education Department was “legally required” to distribute federal funds — money approved for poor students, those with disabilities and others — to states.

“Any attempt by the Trump administration or Congress to gut these programs would be a grave mistake, and we will fight them tooth and nail,” said Randi Weingarten, president of the union.

A draft of Mr. Trump’s order circulated in Washington on Wednesday ahead of a potential announcement. The Wall Street Journal first reported that Mr. Trump could sign the order as soon as Thursday.

Mr. Trump has been blunt about his desire to do away with the department entirely. He remarked recently that he hoped Ms. McMahon would effectively put herself out of a job.

He told reporters last month that the Education Department was “a big con job” and that “I’d like to close it immediately.”

Ms. McMahon’s first action as education secretary was to email the department’s staff about its “final mission,” an indication of how she planned to fulfill Mr. Trump’s goal of shuttering the department.

**Michael C. Bender** is a Times political correspondent covering Donald J. Trump, the Make America Great Again movement and other federal and state elections. [More about Michael C. Bender](#)

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