

TURMOIL



NCNW Advocacy & Policy
REALITY CHECK ON THE TURMOIL

REALITY CHECK
by Tyese Williams, NCNW Advocacy & Policy manager

Welcome to what NCNW will call “Turmoil - Reality Check.” With all the developments coming from the three branches of government, one can often feel they are in “a state of great disturbance, confusion, or uncertainty” = TURMOIL.

We understand you need to know what is really going on, rooted in facts and reality, so that you can be informed and ready for action. NCNW is prepared to give it to you as it happens.

Executive Order Updates

This week the President of the United States issued an executive order (EO) to dismantle the Department of Education (DOE). The newly confirmed secretary, Linda McMahon, had already begun this process last week right after her Senate confirmation. Her first act was to cut half the workforce, 1315 staffers, marking the beginning of the process. Cutting the DOE would put K-12 public schools and HBCUs funding in jeopardy. This would also include Title I funds and funding for students with disabilities.

Here is a list of five actions you can take to be proactive should your school district experience funding cuts.

1. Make it a point to attend school board meetings to stay abreast of funding developments with your school district.
2. Join the parent/teacher association and/or school council/advisory board that is offered at your child's or children's school.
3. Ask questions of your elected officials - local, state and federal levels - on how your school district is funded, and what does it mean should your school district not receive federal funds coming to your state education department and/or school district. Also ask, how does this move affect funding your college or university?

2 – NCNW Advocacy & Policy - Reality Check Newsletter 3

4. Organize a support group with teachers, parents, and school officials to offer learning activities outside of the school system should your school district experience deep teacher cuts.
5. Organize a crowdfunding campaign in conjunction with your school district to possibly raise funds to offset the possible loss of federal funds.

Suspension of Security Clearances and Evaluation of Government Contracts:

Overview: On March 6, the President signed yet another executive order directing the attorney general and director of national intelligence to suspend the security clearances held by members of Perkins Coie, a law firm that has multiple federal contracts with different agencies and also worked with the Democrats during the 2016 campaign representing Hillary Clinton. This move cuts off employees of Perkins Coie from gaining access to federal buildings to review any contracts they have with the federal government. Perkins Coie presented the Steele dossier which alleged the President's 2017 campaign had connections to the Russian government. Perkins Coie has stated that they intend to challenge the executive order.

Medicaid and the Budget Facts

Overview: Over 70 million Americans who rely on Medicaid to get affordable healthcare are at risk of losing their coverage. This includes 13.3 million African Americans who use Medicaid. The current House budget proposal would cut \$880 billion from the Medicaid program. This budget proposal would also cut other programs such as SNAP which over 42.1 million Americans rely on.

1. A fair percentage of Democratic, Republican, and Independent voters all support Medicaid.
 - Support for Medicaid spending cuts is relatively low among traditional conservatives. Only 33% of Republicans support the cuts to Medicaid. Only 35% of voters who supported Trump support cuts to Medicaid. While 23% in rural communities support cuts to the program. Across all of these groups there is overwhelming support for Congress to either expand or maintain the program's funding. (KFF)
 - 52% of Democrats, 57% of Independents, and 44% of Republicans say they or a member of their family uses Medicaid for coverage. Another 13% say they have a close friend who uses Medicaid. (KFF)
2. These budget proposals are only meant to benefit the wealthiest Americans. Not everyday people who are already struggling to afford the cost of living, as well as the cost of their healthcare.
 - This budget proposes massive tax cuts to the wealthy. This proposal seeks to extend the 2017 individual income and estate tax provisions from the 2017 Tax and Jobs Act. The Treasury Department reported this would cost over \$4.2 trillion over the next decade. \$2.5 trillion or 60% of this would go to the top 10%. While the top 1% , who make \$743,247 annually, would see their taxes reduced by \$1.24 trillion. This would account for 30% of the total tax cut. (Centers for American Progress)
 - Overall this proposal will only cut programs that working class Americans rely on, diminish tax credits that low and middle income Americans rely on, and increase the debt and deficit through the trillions of tax cuts. (Centers for American Progress)
3. Families with children, especially in communities of color, will suffer significantly if this proposal is passed.

3 – NCNW Advocacy & Policy - Reality Check Newsletter 3

- All communities use Medicaid, but for many communities of color Medicaid is what they're solely reliant on. These communities are more likely to work lower income jobs that do not have health benefits. (Unidos Report)
- Children represent 47.4% of individuals who rely on Medicaid and CHIP enrollment. This totals to over 37 million children who are now at risk of losing coverage if these cuts are passed. (Medicaid.gov)

Elon Musk, Senior Advisor to the President/Lead of DOGE

Who is Elon Musk?

Elon Musk is the CEO of Tesla, SpaceX, Starlink- a division of SpaceX, X (formerly Twitter), the Boring Company, Neuralink and xAI. Musk is the richest person in the world with a total net worth of \$257 billion according to the "Bloomberg Billionaires Index." The African American, born in South Africa, entrepreneur currently leads the initiative that the Administration and has been task with reducing federal spending working through a department established on January 20, 2025, titled as the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), also the same name of his crypto currency. To clarify, DOGE is not a federal executive department or agency since it was not created and agreed to by Congress.

Musk has not been elected or formally nominated to lead DOGE. This new government initiative which has been established with the purpose of tackling waste, fraud, and spending issues within federal government is still in question. Thus far the initiative has resulted in multiple federal agencies firing thousands of staff, as well as halting funding to Congressional approved priorities. The impacted agencies, to name a few, include USAID, Department of Education, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Department of Defense, and more.

Musk has faced multiple controversies including the fact that his position within the President's circle has created multiple conflicts of interest. He has multiple contracts with the federal government through his companies, including SpaceX and Starlink. Musk's companies are also facing multiple investigations from various federal agencies that he now oversees. The resolve of Musk's orders firing staff and discontinuing funding has effectively made it difficult for affected agencies to carry out their established mandates and functions. Furthermore, DOGE is not an official agency that has been created by Congress, and Musk has not been elected, nominated, nor confirmed to his current position.

Musk has not had a hearing as he is not nominated to a position that would require a Senate confirmation hearing. Here are relevant facts about Elon Musk:

- During the 2024 election cycle Elon Musk donated \$288 million to the President's campaign. Musk also spent money on other Republican candidates totaling over a quarter of a billion dollars.
- Musk used X (formerly Twitter), a platform he purchased for \$44 billion in October 2022, to advocate for the President's policy priorities and other Republican priorities. As well as to criticize the Democratic Party and other opposition to himself and the President.
- Musk is South African but holds both American and Canadian citizenship. His family built their wealth through mineral mines they owned in South Africa during apartheid. Musk, along with the President and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, attacked the South African government in various social media posts for their land policy change and their genocide case against Israel in the

4 – NCNW Advocacy & Policy - Reality Check Newsletter 3

International Court of Justice (ICC). The President signed an executive order halting aid to South Africa citing the case and land policy and included an offer to resettle white South Africans whom he called “victims of unjust racial discrimination.” South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, a former anti-apartheid activist and trade union leader, stated that the country would “not be bullied.”

- DOGE staffers have received six figure salaries while slashing thousands of federal jobs. A total of 62,242 federal jobs were cut in February.

Linda McMahon, Secretary of the Department of Education

Who is Linda McMahon?

Linda McMahon founded and previously ran World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) with her husband Vincent McMahon. McMahon also served as the head of the Small Business Administration in the president’s first term. She was the Republican nominee for Connecticut’s Senate seat running against and losing to both Senator Richard Blumenthal and Senator Chris Murphy respectively in 2010 and 2012. She has a limited background in education; however, she served on Connecticut’s Board of Education for a year. McMahon has faced controversies including helping to cover up sexual abuse allegations against her husband, as well as allegations that she allowed child labor on WWE sets to be carried out under her watch. This includes having children assist with breaking down WWE sets, which requires the usage of heavy construction equipment. McMahon was confirmed to the position of education secretary in a 51-45 vote along party lines.

Hearing Highlights:

- During her hearing McMahon stated that public education is a “system in decline” and that she wants to “reorient” the U.S. Department of Education.
- The Senate Democrats highlighted the actions the administration has taken to dismantle the Department of Education. This includes cutting funding, staff, and its commitment to dismantling the agency.
- Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA) asked McMahon about the plans to dismantle the agency. She stated, “We’d like to do this right.” She went on to say that she would present a plan to Congress to dismantle the department in its entirety. Claiming it is a plan that she thinks, “our senators can get on board with.” To be clear despite the administration’s actions, only an act of Congress can close the department officially.
- Senators questioned McMahon if this plan to dismantle the Department of Education included K-12 school funding, Title I funding (this includes funding for lower income students), and funding for students with disabilities via Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). McMahon on multiple occasions stated that she sees the department and funding as separate. McMahon elaborated that IDEA funding is protected by statute and would not be touched and may be better it be administered by a different agency, specifically the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Senator Maggie Hassan (D-MA) stated, “I just want to be clear; you’re going to put special education into the hands of Robert F. Kennedy Jr.”
- McMahon was questioned about families using public funding to send their kids to private and religious schools. McMahon favored the expansion of school choice stating, “Parents look at their children and say, ‘I want that for my child. My school is failing my child.’” Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) noted that many rural Republicans oppose school choice stating, “it

5 – NCNW Advocacy & Policy - Reality Check Newsletter 3

works if you're in the big city, but in remote districts in Alaska there is no choice." Murkowski asked if she believes that her role would be to support and strengthen our public schools.

McMahon stated, "I absolutely do believe that our public schools are the bedrock of our education. You know, they go back to the very founding of our country."

- McMahon was questioned about DEI and education. She stated, "It was put in place ostensibly for more diversity, equity, and inclusion. And I think what we're seeing it is having an opposite effect." Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) pointed out the anti-DEI policies Secretary of Defense Hegseth has taken, including no longer acknowledging Black History Month. The Senator asked if a school could lose federal funding because they have extracurricular clubs based on race and ethnicity. McMahon stated, "I certainly today don't want to address, you know, hypothetical situations"

#