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Trump Moves to Fire Staff Overseeing Nuclear Weapons Then Backtracks —Report

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President [Donald Trump](#)'s administration has laid off between 1,200 and 2,000 employees at the Department of Energy (DOE), but appeared to partly backtrack amid safety concerns.

Newsweek reached out to the White House and the Department of Energy by email on Friday afternoon for comment.

Why It Matters

The Trump administration has aggressively implemented cuts and layoffs across the federal government in an effort to trim fat and reduce spending. Trump campaigned on reducing the size of the federal government, which [the public has greatly supported](#).

A Reuters/Ipsos poll published at the end of January 2025 found that 61 percent of U.S. adults support the president's plan to downsize the federal government. The poll was conducted between January 24 and 26 among 1,034 adults, with a margin of error of 3.9 percentage points.

However, Trump's means of achieving this goal has proven highly controversial: He initially [ordered a freeze on federal grants and loans](#) that would have cut billions of dollars in funding allocated to state and local governments, and the administration [offered federal employees a "buyout"](#) that would put them on paid administrative leave until September.





A general view of the U.S. Department of Energy on February 14, 2025 in Washington, DC. U.S. President Donald Trump's administration announced the lay offs of 1,200 to 2,000 workers, including probationary employees, at the... [More ANNA](#)

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What To Know

The Trump administration is seeking layoffs that could cut up to 2,000 Energy Department employees, two sources familiar with the decision told Reuters. The department employs approximately 14,000 federal workers and oversees 95,000 contractors across various energy and security sectors.

One source revealed that approximately 325 employees have been dismissed from the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), which oversees the U.S. nuclear weapons fleet and works to secure radiological materials worldwide.

However, another source said those layoffs have been "partly rescinded"—mainly for essential nuclear security workers. It remains unclear how many of the 325 firings were rescinded.

A letter sent to some employees and seen by Reuters said: "DOE finds that your further employment would not be in the public interest. For this reason, you are being removed from your position with DOE and the federal civil service effective today."

Democratic lawmakers confirmed to the outlet that the layoffs also impact workers at national laboratories, hydroelectric plants and Cold War-era nuclear sites. According to two sources, the layoffs followed the arrival of three representatives from billionaire [Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency \(DOGE\)](#) at the agency.

Another 45 employees from the Loans Programs Office also were reportedly dismissed. The office oversees the disbursement of hundreds of billions of dollars in loans for clean energy, nuclear and clean vehicle projects.

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What People Are Saying

Senator Martin Heinrich of New Mexico, a Democrat, last week wrote on X, formerly Twitter: "If DOGE employees aren't cleared to be in Department of Energy systems, then they shouldn't be in Department of Energy systems, period."

Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts, also a Democrat, earlier this week wrote on X: "Elon Musk and DOGE are getting access to the department that controls nuclear material for bombs. If we were alarmed at his access to systems for Medicare payments, we should be horrified by their access to nuclear payloads. I will be demanding answers."

Representative Nick LaLota of New York, a Republican, in an interview with [CNN](#) addressing reports some of the firings were issued in error: "Look, it's unfortunate if those errors did in fact happen - three million federal employees in our system, many of whom are good, hardworking people, patriotic people, who want to advance the nation's interests, but time is of the essence. We're a nation that has a \$2 trillion deficit, \$36 trillion in debt, that's the cause of much of the inflation that American families are feeling, and we have to reduce the size and scope of government and it has to start right now."

What Happens Next

The Trump administration has yet to officially respond to or address reports about layoffs at the Department of Energy, even as the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), an unofficial agency created by executive order, continues its rampage across the federal government.

No information on the newly-launched DOGE website addresses any work taking place at the Department of Energy.

Update, 2/14/25 at 2:45 p.m. ET: This story has been updated with additional context and information.

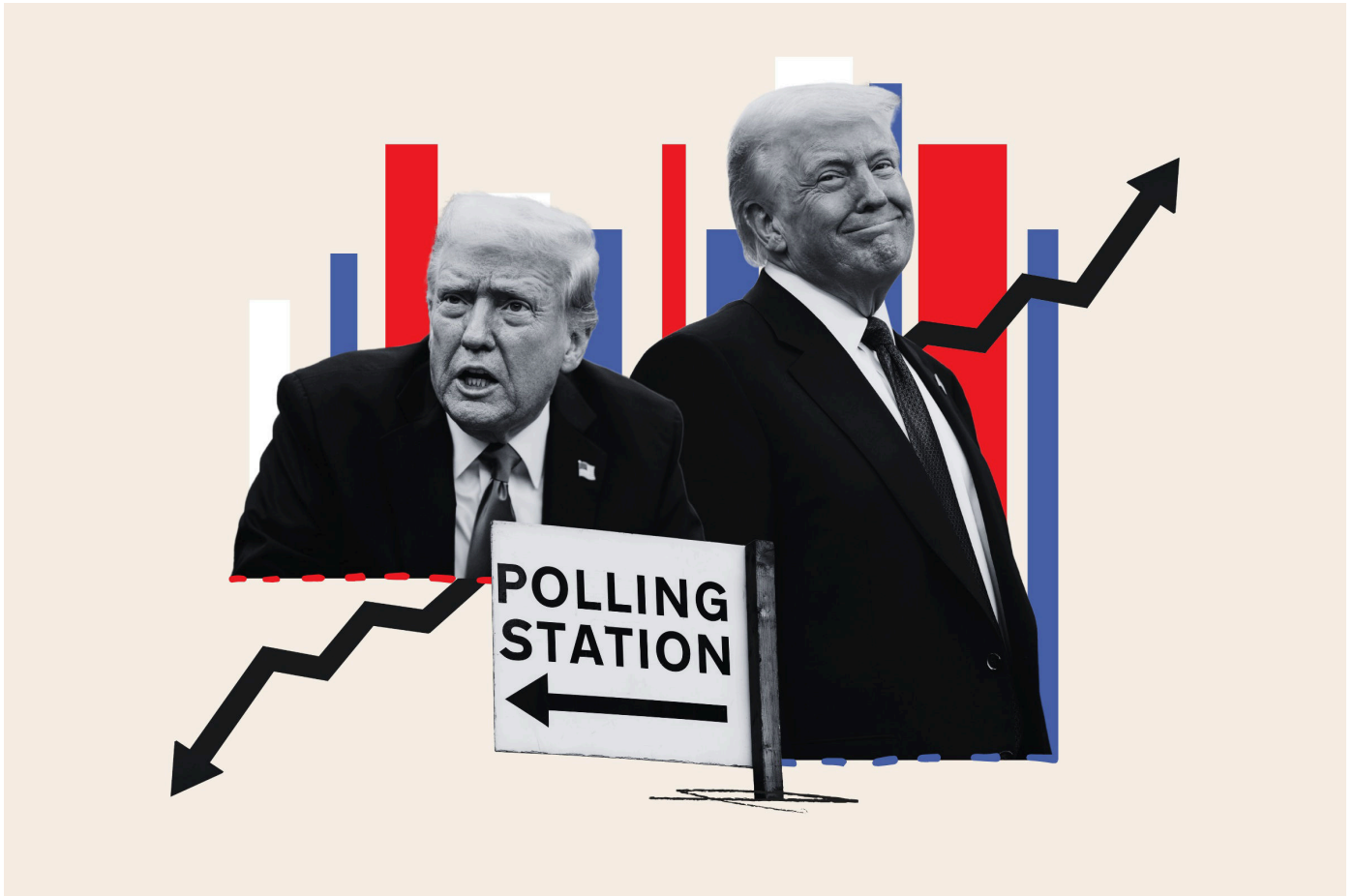
Update, 2/14/25 at 3:17 p.m. ET: This story has been updated with additional comments.

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Gabe Whisnant is Deputy Weekend Editor at *Newsweek* based in South Carolina. Prior to joining *Newsweek* in 2023, he directed ... [read more](#)

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