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Read: Trump sued by unions over "illegal" move to dismantle USAID



Rebecca Falconer



People on Capitol Hill Wednesday protest the Trump administration's move to dismantle USAID.

Photo: Demetrius Freeman/The Washington Post via Getty Images

The Trump administration is being sued over its move to dismantle the [U.S. Agency for International Development](#) (USAID), with unions representing workers in the lawsuit calling the action "unconstitutional and illegal."

The big picture: The lawsuit that was filed in federal court Thursday seeks to block efforts to place [most of USAID's 10,000-strong global workforce](#) on administrative leave by Friday night and restore currently [frozen funding and operations](#).

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- The [lawsuit](#) that was filed in D.C. names as defendants President [Trump](#), Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Secretary of State [Marco Rubio](#), who was recently appointed as USAID's acting administrator, alleging their actions have caused a humanitarian catastrophe.
- "Not a single one of defendants' actions to dismantle USAID" has received congressional approval, notes the suit, filed on behalf of the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) and the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE).

Driving the news: [Elon Musk](#), who's heading the Trump administration's [DOGE team](#) that's [tasked with cutting waste](#) and saving money, has accused USAID of being corrupt, wasteful and said they had to "get rid of the whole thing" because it's "[beyond repair](#)."

- However, the lawsuit says Trump's "actions to dissolve USAID exceed presidential authority" and "only Congress may act to dissolve it or merge it with the Department of State."

Zoom in: The suit alleges the humanitarian consequences of the administration's actions "have already been catastrophic," generating "a global humanitarian crisis by abruptly halting the crucial work of USAID employees, grantees, and contractors."

- It's cost "thousands of American jobs," has "imperiled U.S. national security interests" and deaths are "inevitable" if the administration's action's are not halted, per the suit.
- "Already, 300 babies that would not have had HIV, now do. ... Without judicial intervention, it will only get worse."

What they're saying: "The Trump administration's attack on USAID is part of a coordinated campaign to undermine the will of

Congress and isolate America in the world," said Skye Perryman, president and CEO of Democracy Forward, which filed the suit with Public Citizen Litigation Group.

- "This will make Americans at home and abroad less safe," Perryman added in the [statement](#).

The other side: Rubio at a [briefing](#) in the Dominican Republic earlier Thursday defended the Trump administration's actions and said USAID workers based overseas would on Friday "be on leave of absence — not fired."

- He noted the action would take into account exceptional circumstances and included a 30-day provision for overseas workers to return home.
- The goal was to "identify programs that work and continue them and to identify programs that are not aligned with our national interest" and address them, Rubio said.
- "We're not being punitive here, but this is the only way we've been able to get cooperation from USAID," he added.
- "I'd have preferred not to do it this way. When we tried to do it from the top down by getting cooperation from the central office and USAID, what we found instead are people trying to use the system to sneak through payments and push through payments despite the stop order."
- Representatives for the Trump administration did not immediately respond to Axios' requests for comment in the evening.

What we're watching: The lawsuit is working against a tight deadline. USAID's website [says](#) its order of placing all direct hires

on administrative leave globally, with some exceptions, will take effect at 11:59pm Friday ET.

Read the lawsuit, via [DocumentCloud](#):

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Editor's note: This article has been updated with new details throughout.



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