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The class-action lawsuit accuses the Trump administration of abusing reduction-in-force procedures to target individual workers rather than their positions. JABIN BOTSFORD / THE WASHINGTON POST / GETTY IMAGES

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# Ex-feds axed in DEI purge file class action suit

A group of four former federal employees described the mass reduction in force of those in purportedly “diversity”-related jobs as a means for the Trump administration to “punish perceived political enemies” and disproportionately targeting protected-class employees for dismissal.

[ERICH WAGNER](#) | DECEMBER 5, 2025

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**A** group of former federal workers who lost their jobs during President Trump’s purge of employees in diversity, equity and inclusion roles and agency civil rights offices this week sued the administration, alleging violations of the First Amendment, the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act.

The [class-action lawsuit](#), filed Wednesday in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, accuses the Trump administration of abusing reduction-in-force procedures to [target individual workers](#) rather than their positions and to chase minorities, women and LGBTQ+ employees out of government. Shortly after taking office, Trump signed an [executive order](#) instructing agencies to excise all DEI-related activities from their work, leading to mass layoffs across government.

“President Trump’s directives did not merely represent a change in presidential priorities—an normal occurrence when presidential administrations change,” the lawsuit states. “Rather, they were targeted actions intended to punish perceived political enemies, as well as to eliminate from the federal workforce women, people of color, and those, like plaintiffs, who advocated for or were perceived as advocating for protected racial or gender groups.”

While the executive order and subsequent implementing guidance were “neutral on their face,” they were designed with the “intent to discriminate” against protected classes within federal agencies, the plaintiffs argued. The suit cites the results of the DEI RIF at the Homeland Security Department as an example of how the RIF disproportionately impacted women and people of color.

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While 37 men were laid off from its now-defunct DEI office, 77 women similarly lost their jobs. And 36% of those laid off at DHS were Black, compared to their overall proportion of the DHS workforce of 24%.

In particular, the former employees said that agencies illegally “manipulated” the reductions in force of agency DEI offices to specifically target employees, rather than positions. That included obtaining lists of employees in diversity-related positions in November 2024, in order to better target employees who had transferred into other positions in the intervening months. And agencies sought to deny employees targeted in the RIFs from finding work in other jobs or at other agencies, in contravention of RIF regulations.

“Even as defendants denied employees assignment rights that could have enable them to retain their federal employment, they also took steps to ensure that employees who received notice of separation in a DEIA RIF would find it challenging to find reemployment in the federal government,” the plaintiffs wrote. “For instance, defendants denied DEI employees career transition assistance made available to others following their removals by locking them out of government data systems containing critical information necessary to apply to federal job opportunities.”

The former workers are seeking to return to their old jobs, complete with back pay, restitution for lost benefits, compensatory damages and the expungement of references to their termination from their federal personnel records. [G](#)

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