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# Federal Employees File Class-Action Complaint Against Trump Administration for Unlawfully Targeting Employees for DEI Activities

## Date

**March 26, 2025**

## Issue Area

[Civil Rights, Equity, & Inclusion](#)[Civil Service and Workers' Rights](#)

## Media Contact

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*Complaint cites violations of the First Amendment and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act*

**WASHINGTON**– A group of federal employees filed a groundbreaking legal action today against the Trump administration on behalf of federal employees across federal agencies targeted for their participation in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) activities.

The complaint, filed today before the Merit System Protection Board, was brought on behalf of the federal employees by the ACLU of the District of Columbia (ACLU-D.C.); Lief Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein, LLP; Kalijarvi, Chuzi, Newman & Fitch PC; and Democracy Forward. The complaint was filed in tandem with numerous charges of discrimination filed by federal employees before federal Equal Employment Opportunity offices.

On January 20 and 21, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Orders 14151 and 14173, which instructed the Office of Personnel Management to terminate all government activities related to DEI and mandated that federal agencies compile lists of the government's DEI programs and activities in existence as of November 4, 2024.

Today's complaint alleges that the resulting mass terminations and other attacks on federal employees who are alleged to have participated in DEI activities violates federal employees' rights under the First Amendment. The complaint alleges that the Trump administration targeted employees who it perceived as being associated with

DEI, including those who no longer performed any DEI-related activities in their current positions and those whose only DEI-related activity was involvement in a training or employee resource group. The complaint alleges that such targeting demonstrates that the Trump administration sought to punish employees for what the administration perceived as their political views.

Today's complaint also challenges the gender and racial impacts of the anti-DEI executive orders, which disproportionately singled out federal workers who were not white men for hostility, suspicion, job interference, and termination, in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

This unlawful targeting has affected federal employees across multiple federal agencies. Today's Merit Systems Protection Board complaint was filed on behalf of Mahri Stáinnak of the Office of Personnel Management, and it also identifies other affected employees, including Dr. Paige Brown of the Department of Labor, C. Scott of the Department of Labor, and Ronisca Chambers of the Federal Aviation Administration. The federal employees are asking the Board to reinstate them in their positions and to make them whole for the wages they have lost and other damages they have experienced.

"The thousands of federal employees I have worked with in my sixteen and a half years in the federal government are incredibly passionate, skilled, and hard-working people who have dedicated their lives to making our nation safe, healthy, and prosperous," said plaintiff **Mahri Stáinnak of the Office of Personnel Management**. "By illegally targeting employees across government, the Trump administration is actually hurting all the people who live and work in this country by denying them the important services we provide."

"Targeting hard working civil servants because they are associated with an idea the government dislikes violates the First Amendment. President Trump can't drag us back to a dark chapter in history where the government targeted people simply for their views or values," said **Scott Michelman, legal director at the ACLU-D.C.** "The decision to go after people for DEI work they are no longer doing shows the administration's true motive: to punish employees who they think hold values that clash with the president's extremist agenda."

"The work that the Plaintiffs and Class have performed has been critical to our country: they have assisted Americans surviving natural disasters, responded to infectious disease outbreaks threatening our public health, helped secure our borders, assisted in keeping our aircraft and skies safe for travel, ensured that people in rural communities have access to services, worked to ensure hunters and farmers can enjoy public lands, and created pathways for children needing accommodations so they can stay in school and thrive. They have also ensured that government work itself is fair and culturally competent so that public services can be cost-effective and successful," said **Kelly Dermody of Lieff, Cabraser, Heimann & Bernstein**. "It is an outrage that their ability to serve the American people has been compromised through a misguided assault on such American values as inclusion and fairness."

"Targeting federal workers for removal because they were once assigned to DEI duties or participated in agency-sponsored DEI activities violates fundamental principles that underly the civil service—that employees should be treated fairly, without regard to perceived political affiliation, or race, or sex, and that they should be protected against actions taken for partisan political purposes," said **Mary Kuntz of Kalijarvi, Chuzi, Newman & Fitch PC**.

"This case is about the Trump administration's arbitrary governing and continued attempts to undermine the government's ability to work for all people. No American's life has been made easier or safer by the administration's decision to arbitrarily terminate non-partisan civil servants. We are honored to represent our

clients in this matter and will continue to use all legal tools to protect the American people," said **Skye Perryman, President & CEO at Democracy Forward.**

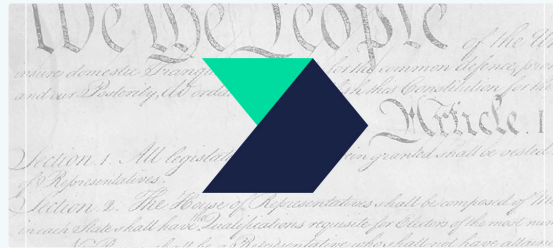
Today's complaint may be found here:

[https://www.acludc.org/sites/default/files/field\\_documents/mspb\\_class\\_complaint\\_stainnak\\_mahri\\_as\\_filed.pdf](https://www.acludc.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/mspb_class_complaint_stainnak_mahri_as_filed.pdf)

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