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## Feds reduce investigations into discrimination claims

### Department of Labor office in NYC no longer conducting inquiries



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President Trump in January signed an executive order titled "Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity," which in part revoked a 1965 order by then-President Lyndon Johnson prohibiting federal contractors from discriminating within their organization or in their hiring process. Trump is pictured in April with U.S. Secretary of Labor Lori Chavez-DeRemer.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Posted Monday, June 23, 2025 5:33 pm

**BY STERLING SEWELL** The Chief

Federal workers in New York City are no longer conducting evaluations, audits or investigations into potentially discriminatory practices by government contractors.



The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, a division of the U.S. Department of Labor, has been historically responsible for enforcing policies for federal contractors that prohibit discrimination based on race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, and status as a veteran.

The OFCCP's regional office in downtown Manhattan typically handles complaints concerning federal contractors in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. But OFCCP employees primarily involved in enforcement were put on administrative leave in April, including those in the Varick Street office, according to a source who wished to remain anonymous over fears of firing.

A press release from the American Federation of Government Employees, the largest federal employee union in the country, said there are only 50 OFCCP employees currently working nationwide, with the majority working in Washington, D.C.

OFCCP collects data about hiring, pay, promotion and termination from federal contractors, including information about earning disparities based on race, sex and ethnicity. This information is then used to find potential patterns of discrimination among federal contractors.

"Why that's so important to New Yorkers, and frankly the public around the country, is that means that our agency is the only agency that is proactively getting this data and analyzing it to see if there's evidence of discrimination," the source told The Chief.

Some employees do not know when they are being discriminated against, but by using data provided by contractors OFCCP can find incidents, the source said. "If a woman or an individual of any race, or a male for that matter, if they are being paid systemically less than their counterparts in a similarly situated position, they're likely not going to know it," the DOL source said. "But yet, our agency is the one that looks at these things."

Last year, OFCCP reached a conciliation agreement with a telecommunications company in Hauppauge, New York (<https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/ofccp/ofccp20240725>), over findings that the company engaged in discrimination against female job applicants. A similar agreement with J.P. Morgan Chase (<https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/ofccp/ofccp20201112>) in 2020 resulted in a nearly \$800,000 payment in back wages to at least 93 female employees who were found to be underpaid by OFCCP. That agreement also resulted in a minimum of \$9 million in pay equity adjustments for female and minority employees at the company.

According to proposed budget documents released on May 30, the DOL is set to do away with the OFCCP altogether, along with the Women's Bureau and Job Corps. The budget also proposes a roughly 27-percent reduction in staffing nationwide when compared to levels at the end of the last administration. Many of these proposed layoffs are scheduled for the OFCCP.

The Department of Labor division was set to reduce its staff by 90 percent early this month. The layoffs have been put on hold pending a lawsuit brought by the AFGE and others.

The proposed 90 percent staffing cuts to OFCCP comes in the wake of an executive order by President Trump (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/31/2025-02097/ending-illegal-discrimination-and-restoring-merit-based-opportunity>) that in part itself revoked a 1965 executive order by President Lyndon B. Johnson ([https://archives.federalregister.gov/issue\\_slice/1965/9/28/12315-12325.pdf](https://archives.federalregister.gov/issue_slice/1965/9/28/12315-12325.pdf)). That executive order prohibited federal contractors from discriminating within their organization or in their hiring process.

The enforcement of the Johnson-era executive order was the responsibility of OFCCP. In letters notifying employees of administrative leave, the newly appointed OFCCP director, Catherine Eschbach, cited the office's "significantly reduced scope of mission" in announcing the administrative leaves. "What is very clear is that the administration is looking to shut down OFCCP completely," the DOL source said.





(<https://zeta.creativecirclecdn.com/chief/original/20250623-181256-4bb-phpuFAJVK.jpg>)

The division of the U.S. Department of Labor responsible for investigating discrimination claims by government contractors has significantly reduced staffing.

SHAWN T. MOORE/DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

### Follows Project 2025 playbook

The president's move to eliminate OFCCP and revoke Executive Order 11246 both fall in line with plans laid out in the Heritage Foundation's "Project 2025" federal policy agenda.

Prior to the imposition of the administrative leaves, employees were offered opportunities to accept deferred resignation or early retirement as part of Trump's plan to shrink the government.

Already, roughly 2,700 DOL employees nationwide have taken the Trump administration's offer to leave the government, according to testimony from U.S. Secretary of Labor Lori Chavez-DeRemer in May. "We've experienced cuts. Our workloads have been increased. [Deadlines] are not being met," another DOL employee who requested anonymity for fear of reprisals told The Chief.

In April, all Department of Labor employees were notified that speaking with the press or former employees without authorization could be punished by firing or even criminal lawsuits. "It's just a bullying, intimidation tactic," the second DOL employee said. "We're not to talk to the press because they know what they're doing is wrong."

Another issue that could be affecting the department's employees is where they are working. On the first day of his presidency, Trump signed an executive order requiring that all remote employees of the federal government return to offices. According to the second DOL source, there is often limited space in regional DOL offices. As a result, many employees are being told to report to DOL offices not within their specific agency.

"People who were hired remote are now being forced into offices that there was never an intention for them to be at," the second DOL source said, adding that some employees who had been working remotely have been placed in offices without supervisors.

Other DOL divisions are also expected to see budget cuts. The Bureau of International Labor Affairs, which enforces labor commitments with foreign trading partners and works to combat international child labor violations, is facing a proposed budget cut of nearly 38 percent. Meanwhile the department's Wage and Hour Division and Mine Safety and Health Administration could each see a 10-percent cut in staffing, according to the proposed budget.

The Wage and Hour Division is responsible for enforcing child labor laws, overtime pay and the minimum wage. According to the second DOL source there has not yet been discussions of layoffs at the Wage and Hour Division.

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