

1 Scott A. Kronland (SBN 171693)  
 2 Stacey M. Leyton (SBN 203827)  
 3 Eileen B. Goldsmith (SBN 218029)  
 4 Danielle E. Leonard (SBN 218201)  
 5 Robin S. Tholin (SBN 344845)  
 6 James Baltzer (SBN 332232)  
 7 ALTSHULER BERZON LLP  
 8 177 Post Street, Suite 300  
 9 San Francisco, CA 94108  
 10 Tel. (415) 421-7151  
 11 Fax (415) 362-8064  
 12 skronland@altber.com  
 13 sleyton@altber.com  
 14 egoldsmith@altber.com  
 15 dleonard@altber.com  
 16 rtholin@altber.com  
 17 jbaltzer@altber.com

18 *Attorneys for Plaintiffs*

19 [Additional Counsel on signature page]

20 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
 21 FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
 22 SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION

23 AMERICAN FEDERATION OF  
 24 GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO;  
 25 AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE  
 26 COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES,  
 27 AFL-CIO; AFGE LOCAL 1216; and UNITED  
 28 NURSES ASSOCIATIONS OF  
 CALIFORNIA/UNION OF HEALTH CARE  
 PROFESSIONALS, AFSCME, AFL-CIO,

Plaintiffs,

v.

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL  
 MANAGEMENT and CHARLES EZELL, in  
 his official capacity as Acting Director of the  
 U.S. Office of Personnel Management,

Defendants.

Case No.

**COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY AND  
INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

1 Plaintiffs American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (“AFGE”), American  
2 Federation of State County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO (“AFSCME”), AFGE Local 1216,  
3 and United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals, AFSCME, AFL-  
4 CIO (“UNAC/UHCP”) (collectively, “Plaintiffs”), file this complaint seeking to enjoin the  
5 terminations of tens of thousands of federal employees in contravention of federal constitutional and  
6 statutory law, against Defendants the United States Office of Personnel Management (“OPM”) and  
7 Acting OPM Director Charles Ezell, and hereby plead as follows:

8 **INTRODUCTION**

9 1. On February 13, 2025, Defendant OPM and its newly appointed Acting Director,  
10 Defendant Charles Ezell, ordered federal agencies across the country to terminate tens of thousands  
11 of federal employees by sending them standardized notices of termination, drafted by OPM, that  
12 falsely state that the terminations are for performance reasons.

13 2. Probationary employees are employees of the competitive service in their first year of  
14 employment, and employees of the excepted service in their first two years of employment (hereafter  
15 collectively “probationary employees”). Probationary employees may include experienced federal  
16 employees who have recently become employed in a new position or a new agency.

17 3. OPM’s directive that federal agencies terminate these employees en masse, on  
18 pretextual grounds, seeks to further the newly elected Presidential Administration’s policy goals of  
19 dramatically curtailing the size and spending of the federal government. But Congress, not OPM,  
20 controls and authorizes federal employment and related spending by the federal administrative  
21 agencies, and Congress has determined that each agency is responsible for managing its own  
22 employees. OPM lacks the constitutional, statutory, or regulatory authority to order federal agencies  
23 to terminate employees in this fashion that Congress has authorized those agencies to hire and  
24 manage, and certainly has no authority to require agencies to perpetrate a massive fraud on the  
25 federal workforce by lying about federal workers’ “performance,” to detriment of those workers, their  
26 families, and all those in the public and private sectors who rely upon those workers for important  
27 services.

1           4.       OPM is an agency with no statutory authority to make termination decisions for  
2 federal employees (other than for OPM’s own employees). Notwithstanding this lack of legal  
3 authority, OPM ordered federal agencies throughout the nation, including in this District, to wipe out  
4 their ranks of probationary employees without any regard to applicable statutes, including the  
5 Administrative Procedure Act (“APA”) and statutes governing federal employment and the respective  
6 roles of OPM and the agencies.

7           5.       OPM also ordered the agencies to use a template e-mail to terminate these workers,  
8 provided by OPM, that falsely inform employees that their terminations are for performance reasons  
9 rather than as part of a government-wide policy to reduce headcount that was authorized by no law.

10          6.       The federal agencies that followed OPM’s directive did not otherwise have plans to  
11 terminate the entirety of their probationary workforce, who were employed in authorized positions to  
12 perform services that in each agency’s judgment were needed to perform their statutorily mandated  
13 role. In fact, some agencies have confirmed to their employees that they did not want to terminate  
14 their probationary employees but were directed to do so by OPM. And they have confirmed that the  
15 notices of termination mandated by OPM were false, because the agencies were *not* firing the  
16 workers for performance reasons.

17          7.       As of the filing of this Complaint, tens of thousands of probationary employees across  
18 dozens of federal agencies have already been terminated in the summary, assembly-line fashion  
19 directed by OPM. Each day, more such employees receive notice of the termination of their federal  
20 employment. The terminations have been conducted summarily, without any advance notice to the  
21 affected employees, throwing their lives, their families’ lives, and the entire federal government into  
22 chaos.

23          8.       OPM, the federal agency charged with implementing this nation’s employment laws,  
24 in one fell swoop has perpetrated one of the most massive employment frauds in the history of this  
25 country, telling tens of thousands of workers that they are being fired for performance reasons, when  
26 they most certainly were not.

27          9.       OPM’s program is an unlawful *ultra vires* action outside the scope of any statutory or  
28 Constitutional authority. OPM’s program also violates the APA’s prohibitions of unlawful, arbitrary

1 and capricious, and procedurally improper agency action (including because this government-wide  
2 action was taken without notice and comment rule-making). Where, as here, a federal agency has  
3 engaged in unlawful action contrary to the APA, the courts “shall ...hold unlawful and set aside” that  
4 action. 5 U.S.C. § 702(2).

5 10. The APA, was designed to “serve as the fundamental charter of the administrative  
6 state.” *Kisor v. Wilkie*, 588 U.S. 558, 580 (2019) (plurality opinion) (internal quotation marks  
7 omitted). As the Supreme Court recently explained, “Congress in 1946 enacted the APA ‘as a check  
8 upon administrators whose zeal might otherwise have carried them to excesses not contemplated in  
9 legislation creating their offices.’” *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo*, 603 U.S. 369, 391 (2024)  
10 (quoting *United States v. Morton Salt Co.*, 338 U.S. 632, 644 (1950)). OPM’s actions disrupt the  
11 constitutional balance of power and violate numerous federal statutes, running roughshod over  
12 fundamental protections against unlawful and arbitrary federal action.

13 11. The Court should immediately enjoin OPM and all those acting in concert with it to  
14 cease implementation of its unlawful order requiring these mass pretextual terminations of  
15 probationary federal employees and to rescind the unlawful terminations that already have occurred.

### 16 JURISDICTION AND VENUE

17 12. This Court has jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331.

18 13. Venue is appropriate in this district under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e). Plaintiffs AFGE and  
19 AFGE Local 1216 represent probationary and trial-period federal employees whose place of  
20 employment is within the Northern District of California, and who have been terminated, or are  
21 subject to termination, because of OPM’s illegal program.

22 14. Intradistrict assignment is appropriate in the San Francisco/Oakland division of this  
23 Court.

### 24 PARTIES

25 15. Plaintiff AFGE, AFL-CIO, is a labor organization and unincorporated association  
26 headquartered at 80 F Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. AFGE, the largest union of federal  
27 employees, represents approximately 800,000 federal civilian employees through its affiliated  
28 councils and locals in every state in the United States, including employees of numerous agencies of

1 the federal government, including the Department of Veterans Affairs (“VA”), Department of  
2 Education, National Institutes of Health, Small Business Administration, and others. AFGE  
3 represents employees of the VA who are employed in San Francisco, Oakland, San Bruno, Eureka,  
4 Ukiah, Clearlake, and Martinez, California.

5 16. Plaintiff AFSCME, AFL-CIO, is a labor organization and unincorporated association  
6 headquartered at 1625 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. AFSCME is the largest trade union  
7 of public employees in the United States, with 1.4 million members organized into approximately  
8 3,400 local unions, 58 councils and affiliates in 46 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.  
9 AFSCME unions represent federal civilian employees in numerous agencies and departments across  
10 the federal government, including the Federal Aviation Administration, the Department of  
11 Agriculture, the Peace Corps, Americorps, and the Veterans Administration.

12 17. Plaintiff AFGE Local 1216 is a labor organization and unincorporated association  
13 headquartered at 4150 Clement Street, San Francisco, California 94121. AFGE Local 1216  
14 represents hundreds of VA employees who are employed in San Francisco, California.

15 18. Plaintiff United Nurses Association of California/United Health Care Professionals,  
16 AFSCME, AFL-CIO (“UNAC”), is a labor organization and an unincorporated association  
17 headquartered at 955 Overland Ct., Suite 150, San Dimas, California 91773. UNAC represents  
18 employees of the VA who are employed at Pettis Memorial Hospital in Loma Linda, California.

19 19. Plaintiffs bring the claims in this complaint on their own behalf and on behalf of their  
20 members.

21 20. Defendant Office of Personnel Management (“OPM”) is a federal agency  
22 headquartered in Washington, D.C. OPM is a federal agency within the meaning of the  
23 Administrative Procedure Act (“APA”), 5 U.S.C. § 551(1).

24 21. Defendant Charles Ezell has been the Acting Director of OPM since January 20, 2025.  
25 He is sued in his official capacity.

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**FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

**I. Statutes and Regulations Governing Termination of Federal Employment**

**A. Congressional Authorization to Federal Agencies and OPM**

22. Congress created the federal agencies that employ federal workers through an exercise of its Article I legislative power. The executive agencies of the federal government are identified in various statutes, including 5 U.S.C. § 101 (listing agencies).

23. Each agency has its own authorizing statutes that govern its administration, including statutory provisions that authorize one or more individuals to act as the head of the agency. *See e.g.*, 10 U.S.C. §§ 111, 113 (Defense); 12 U.S.C. § 5491 (CFPB); 16 U.S.C. § 551 (Agriculture/Forest Service); 26 U.S.C. §§ 7801, 7803 (IRS); 38 U.S.C. §§ 301, 303 (VA); 42 U.S.C. §§ 202, 203 (HHS); 42 U.S.C §§ 281, 282 (NIH); 42 U.S.C. §§3411, 3412 (Education); 42 U.S.C. § 7131 (Energy); 51 U.S.C. § 20111 (NASA).

24. Congress has also authorized, in these agency-specific establishing statutes, each agency head to exercise powers of management over that agency and its employees, including the hiring and firing of employees, consistent with any generally applicable laws. For example:

- 26 U.S.C. §§ 7803, 7804 (IRS: “the Commissioner of Internal Revenue is authorized to employ such number of persons as the Commissioner deems proper for the administration and enforcement of the internal revenue laws, and the Commissioner shall issue all necessary directions, instructions, orders, and rules applicable to such persons.”);
- 42 U.S.C. §§ 7231, 7253 (Energy: “In the performance of his functions the Secretary is authorized to appoint and fix the compensation of such officers and employees, including attorneys, as may be necessary to carry out such functions. Except as otherwise provided in this section, such officers and employees shall be appointed in accordance with the civil service laws ...”; “the Secretary is authorized to establish, alter, consolidate or discontinue such organizational units or components within the Department as he may deem to be necessary or appropriate.”);
- 20 U.S.C. § 3461 (Education: “The Secretary is authorized to appoint and fix the compensation of such officers and employees, including attorneys, as may be necessary to carry out the functions of the Secretary and the Department. Except as otherwise provided by law, such officers and employees shall be appointed in accordance with the civil service laws ...”);

- 1 • 42 U.S.C. § 203 (HHS: “The Secretary is authorized ... to establish within them such  
2 divisions, sections, and other units as he may find necessary; and from time to time abolish,  
3 transfer, and consolidate divisions, sections, and other units and assign their functions and  
4 personnel in such manner as he may find necessary for efficient operation of the Service.”);
- 5 • 12 U.S.C. § 5492 (CFPB: “The Bureau is authorized to establish the general policies of the  
6 Bureau with respect to all executive and administrative functions, including—...(7) the  
7 appointment and supervision of personnel employed by the Bureau; (8) the distribution of  
8 business among personnel appointed and supervised by the Director and among  
9 administrative units of the Bureau”);
- 10 • *See also, e.g.*, 16 U.S.C. §§ 551, 554a, e (Agriculture; management and employment in Forest  
11 Service); 38 U.S.C. §§ 303, 510 (VA: Secretary; “control, direction, and management of the  
12 Department”; “authority to reorganize offices”); 10 U.S. C. § 113 (DOD: Secretary;  
13 “authority, direction, and control over the Department of Defense”); 42 U.S.C. § 282 (NIH:  
14 Director, management authority); 51 U.S.C. §§ 20111, 20113 (NASA: Administrator “shall  
15 have authority and control over all personnel and activities thereof.”).

16 25. In addition to the specific authority granted to each agency head by these authorizing  
17 statutes, Congress also enacted a “General authority to employ” that applies to all federal agencies:

18 Each Executive agency, military department, and the government of the District of Columbia  
19 may employ such number of employees of the various classes recognized by chapter 51 of  
20 this title as Congress may appropriate for from year to year.

21 5 U.S.C. § 3101.

22 26. Besides this specific authority regarding employment decisions, Congress also  
23 delegated general authority to each federal agency head to adopt regulations “for the government of  
24 his department, the conduct of its employees, the distribution and performance of its business...” 5  
25 U.S.C. § 301; *see also* 5 U.S.C. § 302 (authorizing agency heads to delegate their authority to  
26 subordinate employees).

27 27. Congress also enacted the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (“CSRA”) to establish  
28 uniform standards for agencies and civil service employment across the federal government. 5  
U.S.C. § 2101 (defining “civil service”); § 2015 (defining “employee”). The provisions of the CSRA  
include statutes governing agency termination of employees for cause based on performance (5  
U.S.C. § 4303(a); 5 U.S.C. § 7513(a)), and agency layoffs (“reductions in force, or “RIFs”) (5 U.S.C.  
§ 3502).

1           28. Congress also established the OPM by statute. 5 U.S.C. § 1101. Congress did *not*  
2 authorize the OPM to hire or fire any federal employees employed by any agency other than OPM  
3 itself. 5 U.S.C. §§ 1102, 1103. Rather, OPM’s role, as established by Congress, is to act as the  
4 human resources agency for the federal government, including by creating and publishing  
5 government-wide rules in compliance with the APA. 5 U.S.C. §§ 1103, 1105. OPM’s authority with  
6 respect to the termination of employees of other agencies and departments is limited to providing  
7 technical assistance and writing regulations. 5 U.S.C. §§ 4304, 4305, 7514.

8           29. As the Acting Solicitor General recently confirmed in a petition to the U.S. Supreme  
9 Court on behalf of the President and other federal officials, “[a]gency heads control hiring and firing  
10 decisions for subordinates—here, an agency of over 100 people who perform important investigative  
11 and enforcement functions affecting the entire federal workforce.” Thus, in support of its request to  
12 vacate a district court temporary restraining order reinstating the head of the Office of Special  
13 Counsel, the federal government argued that the President’s inability to remove the head of the  
14 agency deprived him of the power to control agency’s employees—because *only the agency head* is  
15 authorized to hire and fire an agency’s employees.<sup>1</sup>

#### 16           **B. Probationary and Trial-Period Employees in Federal Service**

17           30. Approximately 200,000 probationary employees are employed in agencies throughout  
18 the federal government nationwide.<sup>2</sup> Of these, approximately 15,000 are employed in California,  
19 providing services that range from fire prevention to veterans’ care.

20           31. OPM’s mass termination program has swept up two categories of federal employees,  
21 whose employment is governed by statute and regulation: probationary employees in the  
22 “competitive” service, and employees within their first two years of employment in the “excepted”  
23 service. Plaintiffs refer herein to all such employees as “probationary employees.”  
24

25 \_\_\_\_\_  
26 <sup>1</sup> Application to Vacate the Order Issued by the United States District Court for the District of Columbia  
27 and Request for an Immediate Administrative Stay, *Bessent v. Dellinger*,  
<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/25536868-dellinger-scotus-emergency-filing/?mode=document> at  
27 (filed U.S. Supreme Court Feb. 16, 2025).

28 <sup>2</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-administration-fired-probationary-federal-workers-veterans-affairs-agencies-2025-2>



1           32. Probationary employees in the competitive service are, with some exceptions, those  
2 who have been employed for less than one year. 5 U.S.C. § 7511(a)(1)(A)(ii); 5 C.F.R. § 315.801.  
3 Employees are appointed as “career” or “career-conditional employees” subject to completing the  
4 probationary period. 5 C.F.R. § 315.201(a).

5           33. The probationary period provides the opportunity for the federal agency to assess the  
6 individual performance of the employee. Under governing OPM regulations, an agency “shall utilize  
7 the probationary period as fully as possible to determine the fitness of the employee and shall  
8 terminate his or her services during this period if the employee fails to demonstrate fully his or her  
9 qualifications for continued employment.” 5 C.F.R. § 315.803(a).

10           34. Most employees in the excepted service are also subject to a statutory trial period of  
11 two years, which, like the probationary period in the competitive service, is intended to permit the  
12 agency to evaluate the employee’s performance and fitness for long-term employment. 5 U.S.C. §  
13 7511(a)(1)(C)(ii).

#### 14           **C. Regulations Governing the Termination of Probationary Employees**

15           35. Federal agencies may lawfully terminate probationary employees based on the  
16 agency’s assessment of the employee’s performance during the probationary period, pursuant to  
17 5 C.F.R. § 315.804(a), which is entitled: “Termination of probationers for unsatisfactory performance  
18 or conduct.”

19           36. Under that regulation, “when an agency decides to terminate an employee serving a  
20 probationary or trial period because his work performance or conduct during this period fails to  
21 demonstrate his fitness or his qualifications for continued employment, it shall terminate his services  
22 by notifying him in writing as to why he is being separated and the effective date of the action.” 5  
23 C.F.R. § 315.804(a). “The information in the notice as to why the employee is being terminated  
24 shall, as a minimum, consist of the agency’s conclusions as to the inadequacies of his performance or  
25 conduct.” *Id.* Trial-period employees in the excepted service have the same notice rights when  
26 removed from their positions for performance reasons. 5 C.F.R. § 316.304.

27           37. Federal agencies may also lawfully terminate a probationary employee “for reasons  
28 based in whole or in part in conditions arising before his appointment.” 5 C.F.R. § 515.805.

1           **D. Statutes and Regulations Governing the Termination of Employees as Part of a**  
2           **RIF**

3           38. Federal agencies may also terminate probationary employees as part of an agency RIF.  
4 An agency may conduct a RIF “to reduce the size of its workforce.” *Tiltti v. Weise*, 155 F.3d 596, 601  
5 (2d Cir. 1998). “RIFs are not aimed at removing particular individuals; rather, they are directed  
6 solely at positions.” *Grier v. Dep’t of Health & Hum. Servs.*, 750 F.2d 944, 945 (Fed. Cir. 1984).

7           39. Agencies must follow specific statutory directives in conducting a RIF, including  
8 detailed requirements for retention preferences, considerations for veterans, and the consideration of  
9 tenure of employment and length of service. 5 U.S.C. § 3502(a)(1), (3). Congress delegated to OPM  
10 the authority to promulgate regulations that agencies must follow in implementing RIFs. 5 U.S.C. §  
11 3502(a).

12           40. Pursuant to that statutory authorization, and through notice-and-comment rulemaking,  
13 OPM has issued detailed regulations setting forth the procedures by which RIFs must be conducted.  
14 *See* 5 C.F.R. Part 351. These RIF regulations apply whenever an agency determines that it is  
15 necessary to release employees “because of lack of work; shortage of funds; insufficient personnel  
16 ceiling; reorganization; the exercise of reemployment rights or restoration rights; or reclassification  
17 of an employee’s position due to erosion of duties ... .” 5 C.F.R. § 351.201(a)(2).

18           41. All agencies of the federal government are required to comply with the RIF  
19 regulations whenever an agency “determines that a reduction force is necessary.” 5 C.F.R. § 351.204;  
20 *see also* 5 C.F.R. § 351.201(c) (“Each agency is responsible for assuring that the provisions in this  
21 part are uniformly and consistently applied in any one reduction in force.”).

22           42. The RIF regulations apply to employees in the competitive and excepted services. 5  
23 C.F.R. § 351.202(a), (b). Probationary employees are expressly protected by the RIF regulations. 5  
24 C.F.R. §§ 351.501(b)(2), 351.502(b)(2). Probationary employees are included in “group II” of three  
25 groups of employees, and may only be released, in order of retention, after the release of “group III”  
26 employees, a group that includes employees under various temporary, term, and other provisional  
27 appointments. 5 C.F.R. § 351.501(b).

1           43. Before conducting a RIF, a federal agency must establish “competitive areas in which  
2 employees compete for retention.” 5 C.F.R. § 351.402. Thus, RIFs are not conducted based on  
3 agency-wide seniority. Many probationary employees are veterans or would otherwise be entitled to  
4 preference in the event of a RIF.

5           44. The RIF regulations require that employees receive notice of at least 60 days before  
6 being released from employment, or at least 30 days from when the RIF is caused by circumstances  
7 that were not reasonably foreseeable. 5 C.F.R. § 351.801(a), (b).

8           45. The governing statute and the RIF regulations also require that states and local  
9 governments be notified in advance of RIFs of 50 or more employees in an affected geographic area  
10 so they can be prepared to assist affected employees. 5 U.S.C. § 3502; 5 C.F.R. § 351.803.

11 **II. OPM’s Unlawful February 13, 2025 Order to Fire Probationary Employees Across the**  
12 **Nation**

13           46. Before the first day of the new Presidential Administration, OPM had never taken the  
14 position that it had the authority to direct other agencies to terminate employees. As of early January  
15 2025, the Acting OPM Director was Rob Shriver. On January 16, 2025, he issued a press release, and  
16 gave an interview discussing OPM’s work with agencies throughout the federal government on issues  
17 ranging from “skills-based federal hiring”; the “retirement claims backlog”; a “new health insurance  
18 program for Postal workers”; and, significantly, “*how agencies recruit and retain early-career*  
19 *employees.*” (Emphasis added).<sup>3</sup> No mention was made of any federal government plan to terminate  
20 the employment of probationary employees at any agency, or across the nation.

21           47. Before January 20, 2025, OPM had made no public statement regarding any program  
22 to terminate probationary employees. Neither had any agency in the federal government made any  
23 public statement regarding any desire to terminate probationary employees. No union or group of  
24 federal employees had been provided any notice of any program or decision to terminate  
25 probationary employees. On information and belief, before January 20, 2025, OPM had no plans to  
26 order federal agencies to terminate their probationary employees, and no agency had such a plan.

27 \_\_\_\_\_  
28 <sup>3</sup> <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/workforce/2025/01/after-years-of-work-opm-is-hitting-on-all-cylinders-acting-director-says/>.

1           48. Before January 20, 2025, no OPM Director had ever taken the position that OPM had  
2 the legal authority to direct agencies to terminate the employment of employees of other federal  
3 agencies.

4           49. On January 20, 2025, the first day of the incoming Presidential Administration,  
5 President Donald J. Trump appointed Charles Ezell to serve as Acting OPM Director.

6           50. The same day, Acting OPM Director Ezell distributed a memo to “Heads and Acting  
7 Heads of Departments and Agencies” regarding “Guidance on Probationary Periods, Administrative  
8 Leave and Details.” In this memo, Acting Director Ezell directed department and agency heads to  
9 submit to OPM, no later than January 24, 2025, a report listing all “employees on probationary  
10 periods, who have served less than a year in a competitive service appointment, or who have served  
11 less than two years in an excepted service appointment.”<sup>4</sup> The memorandum directed agencies to  
12 “promptly determine whether these employees should be retained at the agency.”<sup>5</sup>

13           51. OPM required agencies to adhere to a *200-character limit* in any explanation provided  
14 as to why any individual employee should be retained by the agency.<sup>6</sup>

15           52. On February 11, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14210, entitled  
16 “Implementing the President’s ‘Department of Government Efficiency’ Workforce Optimization  
17 Initiative.”<sup>7</sup> The Executive Order instructed that “Agency Heads shall promptly undertake  
18 preparations to initiate large-scale reductions in force (RIFs).”<sup>8</sup>

19           53. OPM did not wait for agencies to plan for or initiate any RIF.  
20  
21  
22  
23

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24           <sup>4</sup> [https://www.opm.gov/media/yh3bv2fs/guidance-on-probationary-periods-administrative-leave-and-  
25 details-1-20-2025-final.pdf](https://www.opm.gov/media/yh3bv2fs/guidance-on-probationary-periods-administrative-leave-and-details-1-20-2025-final.pdf)

26           <sup>5</sup> *Id.*

27           <sup>6</sup> [https://federalnewsnetwork.com/workforce/2025/02/opm-asks-agencies-to-justify-keeping-probationary-  
28 employees/](https://federalnewsnetwork.com/workforce/2025/02/opm-asks-agencies-to-justify-keeping-probationary-employees/)

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-  
government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/)

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

1           54. On February 13, 2025, OPM officials met with agency leaders across the federal  
2 government and directed them to begin firing their probationary employees without following RIF  
3 procedures.<sup>9</sup>

4           55. CBS News has reported that: “**The decision on probationary workers**, who  
5 generally have less than a year on the job, **came from the Office of Personnel Management**, which  
6 serves as a human resources department for the federal government. The notification was confirmed  
7 by a person familiar with the matter, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't  
8 authorized to discuss it publicly.” (Boldface added.)<sup>10</sup>

9           56. On information and belief, as of February 13, 2025, prior to the order from OPM, no  
10 federal agency intended to terminate its probationary employees en masse, and no agency intended to  
11 terminate probationary employees (other than on an individualized basis for actual performance or  
12 conduct reasons) without complying with RIF procedures.

13           57. Agencies across the federal government began acting on OPM's February 13 directive  
14 immediately through chaotic mass terminations of their probationary employees.<sup>11</sup>

15           58. Tens of thousands of probationary employees have already been subjected to mass  
16 terminations, with no advance notice, by agencies across the federal government, including  
17 employees at the following agencies:

18           U.S. Forest Service<sup>12</sup>  
19           Department of Veterans Affairs<sup>13</sup>  
20           Department of Education<sup>14</sup>  
21           National Science Foundation<sup>15</sup>

22           <sup>9</sup> <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5144113-federal-probationary-employees-fired/>

23           <sup>10</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/federal-layoffs-probationary-workers-warnings-bigger-cuts-on-way/>

24           <sup>11</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/14/trump-firing-probation-workforce-buyouts-layoffs-doge/f816fbea-eb23-11ef-969b-cfbefac1eb3\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/14/trump-firing-probation-workforce-buyouts-layoffs-doge/f816fbea-eb23-11ef-969b-cfbefac1eb3_story.html)

25           <sup>12</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/mass-firings-federal-workers-begin-trump-musk-purge-us-government-2025-02-13/>; <https://www.sfgate.com/california-parks/article/joshua-tree-yosemite-locals-protest-mass-layoffs-20174425>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/18/climate/trump-layoffs-park-and-forest-service-workers.html>

26           <sup>13</sup> *Id.*; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2025/02/17/trump-fires-federal-workers-performance/>

27           <sup>14</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/mass-firings-federal-workers-begin-trump-musk-purge-us-government-2025-02-13/>

28           <sup>15</sup> <https://www.wired.com/story/national-science-foundation-february-2025-firings/>;  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/18/us/politics/national-science-foundation-firings.html>.

1 General Services Administration<sup>16</sup>  
 Small Business Administration<sup>17</sup>  
 2 Consumer Financial Protection Bureau<sup>18</sup>  
 Department of Energy<sup>19</sup>  
 3 National Nuclear Security Administration<sup>20</sup>  
 Housing and Urban Development<sup>21</sup>  
 4 Center for Disease Control<sup>22</sup>  
 National Park Service<sup>23</sup>  
 5 National Institutes of Health<sup>24</sup>  
 Environmental Protection Agency<sup>25</sup>  
 6 Bureau of Reclamation<sup>26</sup>  
 Department of Interior<sup>27</sup>  
 7 Bonneville Power Association<sup>28</sup>  
 US Department of Agriculture<sup>29</sup>  
 8 Bureau of Land Management<sup>30</sup>  
 US Fish and Wildlife<sup>31</sup>  
 9 Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency<sup>32</sup>  
 US Citizenship and Immigration Services<sup>33</sup>  
 10 Federal Emergency Management Agency<sup>34</sup>  
 Federal Aviation Administration<sup>35</sup>

12 <sup>16</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/mass-firings-federal-workers-begin-trump-musk-purge-us-government-2025-02-13/>

13 <sup>17</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.com/federal-workers-fired-not-fired-then-terminated-sba-2025-2>

14 <sup>18</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/mass-firings-federal-workers-begin-trump-musk-purge-us-government-2025-02-13/>

15 <sup>19</sup> <https://www.eenews.net/articles/doe-to-lay-off-probationary-staff-today/>

16 <sup>20</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2025/02/13/nx-s1-5296928/layoffs-trump-doge-education-energy>

17 <sup>21</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/trump-administration-federal-agencies-fire-probationary-employees-rcna192149>

18 <sup>22</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/trump-firing-probation-workforce-buyouts-layoffs-doge-159a6de411622c2eb651016b1e99da37>

19 <sup>23</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/18/us/politics/national-science-foundation-firings.html> (1000 NPS employees)

20 <sup>24</sup> <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/president-trump-politics/taking-away-years-of-experience-nih-probationary-employees-fired-friday/3845749/>

21 <sup>25</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/US/agencies-federal-workers-fired/story?id=118901289>

22 <sup>26</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/18/us/politics/national-science-foundation-firings.html>

23 <sup>27</sup> *Id.* (1300 Interior Dept employees fired over holiday weekend).

24 <sup>28</sup> <https://www.opb.org/article/2025/02/19/bonneville-power-administration-reverses-30-job-cuts-continues-with-plans-to-eliminate-430-positions/>

25 <sup>29</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2025/02/18/nx-s1-5300150/among-the-federal-workers-fired-usda-workers-who-keep-food-safe-and-crops-growing>

26 <sup>30</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/18/us/politics/national-science-foundation-firings.html>;  
<https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/14/politics/probationary-federal-employees-agencies-firings-doge/index.html>

27 <sup>31</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/14/politics/probationary-federal-employees-agencies-firings-doge/index.html>

28 <sup>32</sup> <https://thehill.com/homenews/5154340-dhs-fires-probationary-employees/>

29 <sup>33</sup> *Id.*

30 <sup>34</sup> <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/19/fema-email-firings-affect-majority-staff-00204779>

31 <sup>35</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/doge-faa-air-traffic-firings-safety-67981aec33b6ee72cbad8dcee31f3437>

1 Department of Transportation<sup>36</sup>  
 2 Food and Drug Administration<sup>37</sup>  
 3 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration<sup>38</sup>  
 4 Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration<sup>39</sup>  
 5 Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services<sup>40</sup>  
 6 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration<sup>41</sup>  
 7 Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation<sup>42</sup>

8 59. While implementing OPM's orders, numerous federal agencies informed workers that  
 9 OPM ordered the terminations. For example, at the National Science Foundation meeting for  
 10 probationary employees, employees were told the following:

11 You've been invited here today because you were either a probationary employee or you are  
 12 an expert on intermittent appointment.

13 We've asked you here today to tell you face to face that we will be terminating your  
 14 employment at the end of the day today.

15 *We've been directed by the administration to remove all term probationary employees.*

16 Today at 11 o'clock, each of you will receive a termination letter by email.

17 At 1 p.m, you will lose access to the network[.] And at the end of the day today, you'll be  
 18 terminated.

19 You ready? You have one more thing. You have the option to resign in lieu of termination.

20 That may be beneficial to you. If you choose to resign, you will not be eligible for  
 21 unemployment.

22 However, if asked when you apply for future positions, you will be able to say that you were  
 23 not terminated.

24 So for those of you that have federal benefits. Sorry. Okay. For those of you that have  
 25 federal benefits, your health insurance will be terminated at the end of the pay period.

26 <sup>36</sup> <https://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/national-international/transportation-department-workers-with-exceptional-reviews-told-theyre-fired-for-performance-issues/4111423/?os=iosdF&ref=app>

27 <sup>37</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/18/us/politics/fda-food-safety-jim-jones-resignation.html> (terminated workers "included people with specialized skills in infant formula safety and food safety response"; FDA food safety chief resigns because "loss of critical employees overseeing the nation's food supply made his work impossible").

28 <sup>38</sup> <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/18/layoffs-auto-pipeline-safety-00204715>

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.fiercehealthcare.com/regulatory/mass-layoffs-hhs-cdc-cuts-1300-probationary-workers-reports-say>

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/fdic-fires-new-employees-part-broader-government-layoffs-2025-02-18/>

1 Your federal dental and vision insurance plan, they will terminate at the end of the pay period.  
2 There is no extension for coverage under FedVIP.

3 ...  
4 This is in executing Government-wide guidance from the administration. I'm sure you've  
5 read in the news that all agencies are terminating probationary employees.

6 ...  
7 So there was no limited discretion. *This is not a decision the agency made. This is a*  
8 *direction we received*, first of all. Second of all, this is the first of many forthcoming  
9 workforce reductions.

10 ...  
11 *We are following orders*. We are part of the executive branch. We follow that. I apologize for  
12 people that have made life-changing career moves.

13 ...  
14 We were directed last Friday by OPM to terminate all probationers except for a minimal  
15 number of mission critical probationers.  
16 Mission critical determination, first of all, it is exceptionally small number that we're  
17 permitted to have.

18 ...  
19 There's no negotiation, first of all. *And second of all, the administration has already*  
20 *announced its intention to significantly reduce the workforce*.

21 It is only a matter of time. It is not today is not the only workforce reduction that we will do.

22 60. The NSF explained that the agency had previously been told that it would have  
23 discretion to retain workers, and had in fact made the decision to retain all of its probationary  
24 employees, only to have OPM issue a superseding order on February 13, 2025 requiring the agency  
25 to terminate everyone:

26 We did. In the last two weeks. Up until Friday. Yes. We were told by OPM it was the  
27 agency's discretion whether to remove probationers or not.

28 *We chose to retain them all*. Last Friday night.

They gave direction to there was some direction that was given to cabinet level agencies. And  
so you saw those actions taking place at the end of last week.

But the directions we received were it was our discretion. And late, late Friday night....

*They told us that they directed us to remove probationers*.

61. On information and belief, OPM required agencies to use template letters, which OPM  
created and provided to the agencies, to be sent to those agencies' probationary employees, citing  
performance as the basis for the termination.



1           62. Reflecting that directive, many agencies have used identical or nearly identical text in  
2 letters notifying probationary employees of their termination. For example:

- 3           a. Termination letters received by probationary employees in multiple agencies,  
4 including the Departments of Homeland Security, Health and Human Services,  
5 Agriculture, and Education, included identical introductory language stating as  
6 follows, with identical footnotes and footnote text:

7                           Guidance from the Office of Personnel Management (“OPM”) states,  
8 “An appointment is not final until the probationary/trial period is over,”  
9 and the probationary/trial period is part of “the hiring process for  
10 employees.”[1] “A probationer is still an applicant for a finalized  
11 appointment to a particular position as well as to the Federal  
12 service.”[2] “Until the probationary period has been completed,” a  
probationer has “the burden to demonstrate why it is in the public  
interest for the Government to finalize an appointment to the civil  
service for this particular individual.”[3]

- 13           b. Termination letters received by probationary employees in multiple agencies included  
14 the following boilerplate language describing the reasons for their termination: “The  
15 Agency finds, **based on your performance**, that you have not demonstrated that your  
16 further employment at the Agency would be in the public interest.” (Boldface added).  
17           c. Similarly, termination letters received by probationary employees in multiple agencies  
18 included the following boilerplate language describing the reasons for their  
19 termination: “Unfortunately, the Agency finds that that you are not fit for continued  
20 employment because your ability, knowledge and skills do not fit the Agency’s current  
21 needs, and **your performance** has not been adequate to justify further employment at  
22 the Agency.” (Boldface added).<sup>43</sup>

23  
24  
25  
26           <sup>43</sup> Recent reporting by the Washington Post revealed similar templates and instructions by OPM to agencies  
27 in January and February 2025 with respect to employees unlawfully targeted for termination and/or  
28 administrative leave because of perceived participation in work related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
programs. Washington Post, Feb. 15, 2025,, *Records show how DOGE planned Trump’s DEI purge — and who  
gets fired next*, available at: <https://wapo.st/4jVWqEd>.

1           63.     At the National Science Foundation meeting reference above, employees were told the  
2 language in the letters came from the “boilerplate” language from OPM:

3           “The cause comes from boilerplate we received from OPM. The cause says that the agency  
4 finds based on your performance that you have not demonstrated that your further  
5 employment at the agency would be in the public interest.”

6           64.     The termination letters issued to probationary employees cite, as authority for the  
7 terminations, the regulations that govern terminations **for performance reasons**: 5 C.F.R. § 315.803  
8 (directing agencies to terminate probationary employees “if the employee fails to demonstrate fully  
9 his or her qualifications for continued employment”); 5 C.F.R. § 315.804 (requiring notice of the  
10 reasons when an agency “decides to terminate an employee serving a probationary or trial period  
11 because his work performance or conduct during this period fails to demonstrate his fitness or his  
12 qualifications for continued employment,” including a statement of the “agency’s conclusions as to  
13 the inadequacies of [the employee’s] performance or conduct”); and 5 C.F.R. § 316.304 (entitling trial  
14 period employees in the excepted service to the same notice rights upon termination for performance  
15 reasons as probationary employees in the competitive service).

16           65.     Despite the citation of these authorities in the template termination letters, the letters  
17 fail to provide any individualized reasons why the employees’ performance warranted termination.  
18 Many termination letters appear to have been created by means of mail merges. Some termination  
19 letters do not even specify the name of the employee being terminated.

20           66.     The reference to employee performance in the mass termination letters and the citation  
21 to the authority for the termination of probationary employees for performance reasons is a pretext.  
22 The real reason for the mass terminations, as expressed by the incoming Presidential Administration,  
23 is to reduce the size of the federal workforce.

24           67.     Many terminated probationary employees had received excellent performance reviews  
25 from their agencies. Supervisors were not consulted as to the performance of individual probationary  
26 employees before they were terminated. On information and belief, some probationary employees  
27 have subsequently been told by agency representatives that they were terminated solely because their  
28 agencies were being restructured, not based on any performance or conduct by the employee.

1           68. USA Today recently reported that “Fired probationary employees interviewed by USA  
2 TODAY all said they were never told of any performance problems. One hadn’t been in the job long  
3 enough to have a performance review. Another was fired just a month into her job after relocating  
4 from more than 1,700 miles away to take it. And a third employee said his supervisor explicitly told  
5 him he wasn’t being terminated for performance reasons.”<sup>44</sup>

6           69. NBC News reported that although Department of Transportation probationary  
7 employees received letters stating that they were being terminated for performance reasons, “most of  
8 those employees were rated as being ‘exceptional’ performers by their supervisors.”<sup>45</sup>

9           70. The Washington Post reported that: “One well-rated Veterans Affairs staffer texted her  
10 boss to complain after she was fired. In text messages obtained by The Post, he replied, “It states it’s  
11 due to your performance which is not true. ... Your performance has nothing to do with this.”<sup>46</sup>

12           71. On information and belief, Defendants plan further waves of mass pretextual  
13 terminations of probationary employees.

### 14 **III. Impact on Plaintiffs, the Federal Government, and the Public**

15           72. Plaintiffs each represent probationary employees who have been summarily fired, and  
16 falsely informed that their termination was based on performance, as a result of OPM’s orders to  
17 federal agencies.

18           73. Each Plaintiff has the core function of representing employees in federal bargaining  
19 units in collective bargaining and providing counseling, advice, and representation to represented  
20 employees in the event of adverse employment actions.

21           74. Each Plaintiff has been prevented, by the surprise mass terminations, from exercising  
22 those core functions as employee representative, including because by providing sham reasons for  
23 probationary employees’ terminations, OPM has undermined the Plaintiffs’ ability to effectively  
24 assist represented employees in vindicating their rights and seeking appropriate remedies.

25 \_\_\_\_\_  
26 <sup>44</sup><https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/its-a-lie-federal-workers-incensed-by-performance-language-in-termination-letters/ar-AA1zcrnN?ocid=BingNewsSerp>

27 <sup>45</sup><https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/doge/federal-workers-exceptional-reviews-fired-performance-issues-rcna192347>

28 <sup>46</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2025/02/17/trump-fires-federal-workers-performance/>

1           75. Each Plaintiff has expended substantial time and resources in the days following the  
2 surprise mass terminations addressing member concerns and attempting to provide employees with  
3 effective representation. As a result of the surprise mass terminations, each Plaintiff has been forced  
4 to divert resources that would be devoted to representing employees who have experienced adverse  
5 employment action for legitimate resources.

6           76. Each Plaintiff has been harmed in multiple other ways by the termination of its  
7 members, including by the loss of dues income and bargaining power.

8           77. Terminated employees and their families now face an immediate loss of income and  
9 benefits (including health benefits); economic insecurity; the immediate need to search for alternative  
10 employment; and the future adverse impact of an employment termination falsely predicated on  
11 performance.

12           78. OPM’s actions have already had impacts in California beyond terminated employees,  
13 their families, and their representatives. For example, “the Trump administration has already made  
14 the United States more exposed to catastrophic wildfires in ways that will be difficult to reverse,  
15 current and former federal employees say....The job cuts, which amount to roughly 10 percent of the  
16 agency’s work force, could hobble the Forest Service, which was already struggling to remove  
17 vegetation across its vast land holdings at a pace that matches the growing threat from fires,  
18 according to current and former federal employees, as well as private companies and nonprofit  
19 organizations that work on thinning forested lands.”<sup>47</sup> The effects have been immediate:

20           In California, the Forest Service’s efforts to remove underbrush are on pause, according to a  
21 person who manages an organization that runs wildfire prevention projects in the state and  
22 who spoke on the condition of anonymity out of concern of reprisals.<sup>48</sup>

23 //  
24 //  
25 //  
26 //

27 \_\_\_\_\_  
<sup>47</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/15/climate/us-forest-service-layoffs-wildfires.html>

28 <sup>48</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/15/climate/us-forest-service-layoffs-wildfires.html>

1 **CLAIMS FOR RELIEF**

2 **Claim I: Separation of Powers/*Ultra Vires***

3 **OPM’s Order to Federal Agencies to Terminate Probationary Employees**  
4 **Unlawfully Conflicts with and Overrides Legislative Power**

5 79. Plaintiffs incorporate by reference all preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

6 80. Plaintiffs have a non-statutory right of action to enjoin and declare unlawful official  
7 action that is ultra vires.

8 81. The Constitution vests the legislative power in Congress. U.S. Const., art. I. Federal  
9 legislation must be passed by both chambers of Congress before it may be presented to the President,  
10 and, if signed, become law. U.S. Const., art. I.; *I.N.S. v. Chadha*, 462 U.S. 919, 951 (1983).

11 82. The Constitution vests executive power in the President. U.S. Const., art. II, and  
12 imposes on the President a duty to “take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed.” U.S. Const. art.  
13 II, § 3.

14 83. The President and Executive Branch have no constitutional power to unilaterally  
15 enact, amend, or repeal parts of duly enacted statutes. *Clinton v. City of New York*, 524 U.S. 417,  
16 438–39 (1998). The declared purpose of separating and dividing the powers of government was to  
17 “diffus[e] power the better to secure liberty.” *Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. v. Sawyer*, 343 U.S. 579,  
18 635 (1952) (Jackson, J., concurring); *see also Bowsher v. Synar*, 478 U.S. 714, 721–22 (1986)  
19 (“Justice Jackson’s words echo the famous warning of Montesquieu, quoted by James Madison in  
20 The Federalist No. 47, that ‘there can be no liberty where the legislative and executive powers are  
21 united in the same person, or body of magistrates’....” The Federalist No. 47, p. 325 (J. Cooke ed.  
22 1961).”).

23 84. Congress exercised its Article I legislative authority to create the agencies of the  
24 federal government. *See generally* United States Code, Title 5 (Government Organization and  
25 Employees). To the agency heads, Congress has also expressly delegated the power to manage the  
26 functions of the agencies, including the right to employ and discharge subordinate employees of the  
27 agencies and to spend appropriated funds on those positions.

1           85. In addition to specific authorizing statutes, Congress has also generally authorized the  
2 heads of administrative agencies to make employment decisions (5 U.S.C. § 3101), manage the  
3 employees of that agency (5 U.S.C. § 301), or delegate to subordinate officers the management  
4 decisions, including the hiring and firing of employees (5 U.S.C. § 302).

5           86. Congress also made the federal administrative agencies subject to the requirements of  
6 the CSRA, which sets forth uniform rules pertaining to employment for the civil service across  
7 federal agencies. The agencies, led by their agency heads, are obligated by Congress to comply with  
8 the CSRA with respect to their employees.

9           87. The OPM Program requiring federal agencies to remove probationary employees  
10 throughout the federal government unlawfully usurps the legislative authority of Congress and is  
11 therefore ultra vires, by overriding the direct Congressional authorization of agency heads to manage  
12 the affairs and employees of their respective agencies, including by overriding each of the following  
13 statutes:

- 14           a. The authorization to all agencies to employ: 5 U.S.C. § 3101;
- 15           b. The authorization to all agencies to manage agency affairs via rules, including rules  
16 for employment: 5 U.S.C. §§ 301, 302;
- 17           c. The specific authorizing statutes for each federal agency, which create the office of  
18 agency head to administer the agencies, and enumerate the duties of the agency heads  
19 including with respect to employment: *e.g.*, 26 U.S.C. §§ 7803, 7804 (IRS); 42 U.S.C.  
20 §§ 7231, 7253 (DOE); 20 U.S.C. § 3461 (Dept. of Ed.); 42 U.S.C. § 203 (HHS); 12  
21 U.S.C. § 5492 (CFPB); 16 U.S.C. §§ 551, 554a, e (Agr.; Forest Service); 38 U.S.C. §  
22 303, 510 (VA); 10 U.S.C. § 113 (DOD); 42 U.S.C. § 282 (NIH); 51 U.S.C. §§  
23 20111, 20113 (NASA).
- 24           d. The CSRA authorization to agencies that govern employee removal: 5 U.S.C. §§  
25 7512, 7513;
- 26           e. The CSRA provisions that apply to agency RIFs, which authorize OPM to create  
27 regulations by which agencies may conduct RIFs of their employees: 5 U.S.C. § 3502;  
28 *see also* 5 C.F.R. § 351.204 Responsibility of agency (“Each agency covered by this  
part is responsible for following and applying the regulations in this part when the  
agency determines that a reduction force is necessary.”); *id.* § 351.205 Authority of  
OPM (“The Office of Personnel Management may establish further guidance and  
instructions for the planning, preparation, conduct, and review of reductions in  
force.”).

1 88. OPM’s actions also exceed any statutory authority granted to it by Congress. In  
2 creating OPM and delegating duties to its Director, Congress did not authorize OPM or its Director to  
3 order the termination of employees at any other federal agency. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 1103 (authorizing  
4 Director of OPM to “appoint[] individuals to be employed *by the Office*” and “direct[] and  
5 supervis[e] employees *of the Office*, distribut[e] business among employees and organizational units  
6 *of the Office*, and direct[e] the internal management *of the Office*”) (emphases added).

7 89. OPM’s actions were not authorized by any Article II Executive power, because no  
8 Article II constitutional power authorizes OPM to order federal agencies created by Congress to  
9 discharge subordinate agency employees, or to direct agencies to rely on false statements regarding  
10 employee performance to effectuate the discharged ordered by OPM.

11 90. Therefore, OPM’s order to the federal agencies to terminate probationary employees  
12 was issued without legal authority and is *ultra vires*.

13  
14 **Claim II: Administrative Procedures Act Section 706(2)(A) and (C)**  
**(Action Inconsistent with Law and Exceeding Statutory Authority)**

15 **The OPM Order to Terminate Probationary Employees Government-Wide**  
16 **Violates Statutes Governing Agency Powers and the CSRA**

17 91. Plaintiffs incorporate by reference all preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

18 92. Plaintiffs’ federal employee members are subject to the requirements of the OPM  
19 order that all federal agencies terminate probationary employees, and Plaintiffs and their members are  
20 persons who have suffered legal wrong as a result of, and have been adversely affected or aggrieved  
21 by, OPM and Acting OPM Director’s actions for purposes of 5 U.S.C. § 702.

22 93. OPM is an agency that Congress has made subject to the APA. 5 U.S.C. § 701.  
23 OPM’s mass termination program and order to federal agencies constitutes final agency action under  
24 the APA. 5 U.S.C. § 704.

25 94. Under the APA, a court shall “hold unlawful and set aside agency action” that is  
26 “arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with law” (5 U.S.C. §  
27 706(2)(A)), or that is “in excess of statutory jurisdiction, authority, or limitations, or short of statutory  
28 right” (5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(C)).

1           95.     The actions of OPM and its Acting Director, including but not limited to the OPM  
2 program requiring federal agencies to terminate probationary employees, violate the Administrative  
3 Procedure Act because they are inconsistent with law in violation of 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(A), and  
4 exceed statutory authority, in violation of 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(C), and are for those reasons also  
5 arbitrary and capricious in violation of 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(A).

6           96.     The actions of OPM and its Acting Director overriding the direct Congressional  
7 authorization of agency heads to manage the affairs and employees of their respective agencies,  
8 including by overriding each and every one of the following statutes:

- 9           a.     The authorization to employ: 5 U.S.C. § 3101;
- 10          b.     The authorization to manage agency affairs via rules, including rules for employment:  
11 5 U.S.C. §§ 301, 302;
- 12          c.     The specific authorizing statutes for each federal agency, which create the office of  
13 agency head to administer the agencies, and enumerate the duties of the agency heads  
14 including with respect to employment: *e.g.*, 26 U.S.C. §§ 7803, 7804 (IRS); 42 U.S.C.  
15 §§ 7231, 7253 (DOE); 20 U.S.C. § 3461 (Dept. of Ed.); 42 U.S.C. § 203 (HHS); 12  
16 U.S.C. § 5492 (CFPB); 16 U.S.C. § 551, 554a, e (Agr.; Forest Service); 38 U.S.C. §§  
17 303, 510 (VA); 10 U.S.C. § 113 (DOD); 42 U.S.C. § 282 (NIH); 51 U.S.C. §§  
18 20111, 20113 (NASA).
- 19          d.     The CSRA authorization to agencies that govern employee removal: 5 U.S.C. §§  
20 7512, 7513;
- 21          e.     The CSRA provisions that apply to agency RIFs, which authorize OPM to promulgate  
22 regulations by which agencies may conduct RIFs of their employees: 5 U.S.C. § 3502;  
23 *see also* 5 C.F.R. § 351.204 Responsibility of agency (“Each agency covered by this  
24 part is responsible for following and applying the regulations in this part when the  
25 agency determines that a reduction force is necessary.”); *id.*, § 351.205 Authority of  
26 OPM (“The Office of Personnel Management may establish further guidance and  
27 instructions for the planning, preparation, conduct, and review of reductions in  
28 force.”).

97.     OPM’s actions also exceed any statutory power or duties granted by Congress to  
OPM. In creating OPM and delegating duties to its Director, Congress did not authorize OPM or its  
Director to order the removal of employees employed by any other federal agency. *See* 5 U.S.C. §  
1103 (authorizing Director of OPM to “appoint[] individuals to be employed *by the Office*” and  
“direct[] and supervis[e] employees *of the Office*, distribut[e] business among employees and



1 organizational units *of the Office*, and direct[e] the internal management *of the Office*”) (emphases  
2 added).

3 **Claim III: Administrative Procedures Act Section 706(2)(A) (Arbitrary and Capricious)**

4 **The OPM Order to Terminate Probationary Employees Government-Wide by Falsely**  
5 **Invoking Performance is Arbitrary and Capricious**

6 98. Plaintiffs incorporate by reference all preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

7 99. Plaintiffs’ federal employee members are subject to the requirements of the OPM  
8 order to federal agencies to terminate probationary employees, and Plaintiffs and their members are  
9 persons who have suffered legal wrong as a result of, and have been adversely affected or aggrieved  
10 by, OPM and Acting OPM Director’s actions for purposes of 5 U.S.C. § 702.

11 100. OPM is an agency that Congress has made subject to the APA. 5 U.S.C. § 701.  
12 OPM’s order to federal agencies constitutes final agency action under the APA. 5 U.S.C. § 704.

13 101. The actions of OPM and its Acting Director, including but not limited to the OPM  
14 program requiring federal agencies to terminate probationary employees, violate the APA because  
15 they are arbitrary and capricious, in violation of 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(A), for reasons that include the  
16 following: OPM’s actions are based on the fiction that the employees are being terminated for  
17 performance reasons; OPM’s actions are intended to deprive terminated employees of an  
18 administrative remedy; OPM’s actions required agencies to terminate employees immediately, often  
19 with only a few hours notice; OPM’s actions required agencies to violate commitments made to  
20 employees and the agency’s own plans for those employees; and OPM’s actions had no relationship  
21 to agencies’ staffing needs or statutory mandates.

22 **Claim IV: Administrative Procedures Act Section 706(2)(D)**  
23 **(Notice and Comment Rulemaking)**

24 **The OPM Order to Terminate Probationary Employees Government-wide is Void for**  
25 **Failure to Comply with Required Notice and Comment Rulemaking**

26 102. Plaintiffs incorporate by reference all preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth Herein.

27 103. Plaintiffs’ federal employee members are subject to the requirements of the OPM  
28 Program requiring federal agencies to terminate probationary employees and Plaintiffs and their

1 members are persons who have suffered legal wrong as a result of, and have been adversely affected  
2 or aggrieved by, OPM and Acting OPM Director’s actions for purposes of 5 U.S.C. § 702. Had OPM  
3 followed notice-and-comment procedures required by the APA, Plaintiffs would have provided  
4 comments about the OPM Program.

5 104. OPM is an agency that Congress has made subject to the APA. 5 U.S.C. § 701.  
6 OPM’s order to federal agencies constitutes final agency action under the APA. 5 U.S.C. § 704.

7 105. Under the APA, a court shall “hold unlawful and set aside agency action ...found to be  
8 .... without observance of procedure required by law.” 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(D).

9 106. The OPM Order directing agencies to terminate probationary employees is a “rule” for  
10 purposes of the APA. 5 U.S.C. § 551(4).

11 107. Congress assigned to the Director of OPM the duty of “executing, administering, and  
12 enforcing—(A) the civil service rules and regulations of the President and the Office and the laws  
13 governing the civil service.” 5 U.S.C. § 1103(a)(5)(1). Congress also required that “in the exercise  
14 of the functions assigned under this chapter, the Director shall be subject to subsections (b), (c), and  
15 (d) of section 553 of this title.” 5 U.S.C. § 1105. Congress expressly made the requirements of  
16 section 553 apply to OPM actions “notwithstanding subsection (a) of such section 553,” which  
17 otherwise exempts “matter[s] relating to agency management or personnel or to public property,  
18 loans, grants, benefits, or contracts.” 5 U.S.C. § 553(a).

19 108. Notwithstanding the OPM Director’s express obligations pursuant to 5 U.S.C. §§ 1103  
20 and 1105 to comply with notice and comment rule-making pursuant to the APA, neither OPM nor its  
21 Acting Director complied with the rule-making provisions set forth in 5 U.S.C. § 553 before issuing  
22 the OPM order directing agencies to terminate probationary employees.

23 109. OPM’s order directing agencies to terminate probationary employees therefore also  
24 violates 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(D) by failing to observe procedures required by law.

25 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

26 Wherefore, Plaintiffs pray that this Court:

27 1. Declare that OPM’s order requiring federal agencies to terminate probationary  
28 employees is unlawful;

1           2.       Enter preliminary or permanent injunctive relief setting aside OPM’s order as  
2 unlawful; requiring Defendants, and all persons acting in concert with them, to cease terminations of  
3 probationary employees pursuant to OPM’s program and order; and requiring Defendants, and all  
4 persons acting in concert with them, to rescind the prior unlawful terminations of probationary  
5 employees pursuant to OPM’s Order.

6           3.       Award Plaintiffs their costs, reasonable attorneys’ fees, and other disbursements as  
7 appropriate;

8           4.       Grant such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

9  
10 DATED: February 19, 2025

11 Scott A. Kronland  
12 Stacey M. Leyton  
13 Eileen B. Goldsmith  
14 Danielle E. Leonard  
15 Robin S. Tholin  
16 James Baltzer  
17 ALTSHULER BERZON LLP  
18 177 Post St., Suite 300  
19 San Francisco, CA 94108  
20 Tel: (415) 421-7151

21 Norman L. Eisen (*pro hac vice forthcoming*)  
22 STATE DEMOCRACY DEFENDERS  
23 FUND  
24 600 Pennsylvania Avenue SE #15180  
25 Washington, DC 20003  
26 Tel: (202) 594-9958  
27 Norman@statedemocracymdefenders.org

28 By: /s/ Eileen B. Goldsmith

*Attorneys for Plaintiffs*

Rushab Sanghvi (SBN 302809)  
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT  
EMPLOYEES  
80 F Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
Tel: (202) 639-6426  
Sanghr@afge.org

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By: /s/ Rushab Sanghvi

*Attorneys for Plaintiff American Federation of  
Government Employees (AFGE)*

Teague Paterson (SBN 226659)  
Matthew Blumin (*pro hac vice forthcoming*)  
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY,  
AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES  
1625 L Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
Tel: (202) 775-5900  
Tpaterson@afscme.org  
[MBlumin@afscme.org](mailto:MBlumin@afscme.org)

By: /s/Teague Paterson

*Attorneys for Plaintiff American Federation of State  
County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)*