

Key Executive Orders and Actions in Trump's First 100 Days



Why this matters: In just 100 days the Trump administration issued a wave of executive actions that reshape civil-rights enforcement, starve public education of resources, and strip protections from women, students of color, and LGBTQ+ communities. Don't be fooled by the titles—many sound benign—or even helpful—but the fine print tells another story. Executive orders cannot override existing law, which is why many of these actions are facing legal challenges. There are 18 lawsuits and counting challenge these actions alone—federal courts matter. This fact sheet breaks down the policy shifts and explains their collective impact on gender equity, civil rights, and access to education.

1. Attacks on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Trump administration launched a multi-pronged effort to dismantle diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) efforts across federal agencies, grantmaking institutions, and educational systems. These actions target DEIA by withdrawing federal support, threatening funding, and chilling speech. Together, they jeopardize decades of work to expand access to education and opportunity for underrepresented groups.

Executive Order/Action	What it Does	AAUW Perspective	Lawsuits
Ending Radical and Wasteful Government “DEI” Programs and Preferencing (EO 14151 — Feb 19, 2025)	Orders agencies to terminate diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and purge DEI language from grants, contracts, and hiring.	Shutters mentoring, pay-equity, and STEM-pipeline initiatives that elevate women—especially women of color—into high-wage careers.	✓ <i>National Ass’n of Diversity Officers in Higher Education et al. v. Trump</i> , 1:25-cv-00234 (D. Md., Feb 22, 2025).
Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity (EO 14173 — Jan 21, 2025)	Allows administration to brand most DEI efforts “unlawful,” threatening loss of grants and contracts.	Puts scholarships, research, and bridge programs for women in STEM on the chopping block; invites state copy-cats.	✓ Preliminary injunction granted Mar 3, 2025; stayed Apr 10, 2025 (4th Cir.).
Dear Colleague Letter & FAQ on “Prohibited DEI” (OCR — Feb 14, 2025)	Warns schools that considering race/sex in admissions, hiring, aid, housing, or campus life violates Title VI; FAQ admits no legal force.	Chills programs for student parents, women in engineering, and first-generation students; threatens to pull federal funding.	✓ <i>National Education Association et al. v. U.S. Dept. of Education</i> , 3:25-cv-00567 (N.D. Cal., Mar 15, 2025); PI Apr 29, 2025.

Restoring Equality of Opportunity and Meritocracy (EO 14281 — Apr 23, 2025)	Eliminates disparate-impact standard under Title VI/IX; reopens settlement agreements.	Removes critical tool to uncover systemic discrimination—hurting women athletes and girls of color.	—challenge anticipated
Forced Certification of “No Illegal DEI” (OCR Guidance — Apr 3, 2025)	Requires agencies to certify—under threat of funding loss—that they have no “illegal DEI,” duplicating existing assurances.	Diverts K-12 resources, discourages inclusive STEM curricula for girls, weaponizes Title VI funding threats.	✓ <i>NEA et al. v. U.S. Dept. of Education</i> , 1:25-cv-00890 (D.D.C., Apr 25, 2025); TRO & PI May 12, 2025.

2. Erasing LGBTQ+ Protections

The administration issued orders aimed at excluding gender identity from federal civil rights protections and denying transgender students equal participation in educational programs and athletics. These policies put LGBTQ+ students, especially trans girls and women, at risk of harassment and exclusion.

Executive Order	What it Does	AAUW Perspective	Lawsuits
Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth (EO 14168 — Jan 20, 2025)	Declares only two immutable sexes in federal policy; agencies told Title IX/Title VII exclude gender identity.	Erases protections for transgender and non-binary students and staff—especially trans women.	—challenge anticipated
Keeping Men Out of Women’s Sports (EO 14201 — Feb 5, 2025)	Directs U.S. Department of Education to withhold funds from schools allowing transgender girls/women in women’s sports.	Undermines Title IX’s guarantee of equal athletics; jeopardizes inclusive teams.	✓ <i>Doe v. Cardona</i> , 1:25-cv-00456 (D.N.H., Feb 10, 2025); PI hearing Jun 5, 2025.

3. Dismantling Federal Education Oversight

The administration began transferring core functions of the U.S. Department of Education to the states, including oversight of civil rights and federal student aid. These changes threaten nationwide standards and protections.

Executive Order	What it Does	AAUW Perspective	Lawsuits
Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities (EO 14242 — Mar 20, 2025)	Begins dismantling the U.S. Department of Education by shifting civil-rights and student-aid oversight to states.	“Reckless and shortsighted—threatens equal access for women, students of color, and low-income students.” — AAUW.	—challenge anticipated

4. Undermining Higher-Education Quality & Accountability

Executive actions targeting higher education loosen oversight of for-profit institutions and limit support for minority-serving institutions. These changes threaten quality, affordability, and equity in postsecondary education.

Executive Order	What it Does	AAUW Perspective	Lawsuits
Reforming Accreditation to Strengthen Higher Education (EO 14279 — Apr 23, 2025)	Fast-tracks new accreditors and lets U.S. Department of Education punish institutions that keep DEI standards.	Opens door to predatory for-profit colleges—where women are majority—raising debt burdens; AAUW opposed in Mar 25, 2025 letter.	
White House Initiative to Promote Excellence & Innovation at HBCUs (EO 14283 — Apr 23, 2025)	Restores HBCU initiative while EO 14150 rescinds support for HSIs and TCUs.	Leaves Latina, Indigenous, and Asian-American women at HSIs/TCUs without comparable support.	
Executive Order 14188 (Additional Measures To Combat Anti-Semitism — Feb 13, 2025)	Cancels or suspends billions in federal grants and contracts to universities; limits First Amendment-protected political speech on campuses; dismantles DEIA programs; and targets foreign students and legal residents for arrest, detention, or deportation.	Undermines academic freedom and civil liberties; disproportionately impacts international students, Palestinian advocates, and scholars of color. Harms DEIA efforts across higher education and research.	—challenge anticipated

5. K-12 Orders (Public Schools Under Pressure)

Several executive orders undermine public schools by redirecting funds to private institutions, censoring curricula, and rolling back civil rights guidance on school discipline. These actions threaten inclusive learning environments and equitable opportunities for students of color, LGBTQ+ students, and girls.

Executive Order	What it Does	AAUW Perspective	Lawsuits
Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families (EO 14191 — Jan 29, 2025)	Channels public dollars to private and faith-based schools—via vouchers—diverting funds from public education.	Drains resources from schools educating 90% of girls; fewer AP/STEM courses. AAUW opposed in Apr 2025 letter.	
Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling (EO 14190 — Jan 29, 2025)	Threatens funding for schools teaching “gender ideology”; revives 1776 Commission.	Censors race/gender history; silences LGBTQ+ students.	—challenge anticipated
Reinstating Common Sense School Discipline Policies (EO 14280 — Apr 23, 2025)	Directs U.S. Department of Education to withdraw guidance on racial discipline gaps; only intentional bias counts.	Black girls already face harsher discipline; this order will widen disparities.	

6. Funding Attacks & Budget Cuts

The administration has gutted funding for civil rights enforcement, canceled research at equity-focused institutions, and proposed budget changes that would disproportionately harm women and low-income students.

Action	What it Does	Why It Hurts (AAUW Perspective)
Department of Education Reductions in Force (Feb 28, 2025)	Cuts 1,800 positions—including one-third of civil-rights investigators and student-aid compliance staff.	Guts Title IX enforcement, delays borrower-defense claims, leaves harassment complaints unresolved.
Rescission of Federal Research Grants (Mar 15, 2025)	Withholds \$900 million in NIH, NSF, DOE grants from universities that retain DEI initiatives.	Threatens labs led by women scientists and graduate-student stipends.

FY 2026 Budget Reconciliation Proposals (Apr 8, 2025)	Slashes Pell growth, ends Public Service Loan Forgiveness, raises payments on income-driven plans.	Forces more women to borrow/pay longer; ends relief for women-dominated professions.
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7. Nominations with Consequences

Linda McMahon was confirmed as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education on February 13, 2025. McMahon's support for private-school vouchers would strip critical federal funding from public schools, her refusal to protect student-loan borrowers threatens a lifetime of debt, and her disregard for the Office for Civil Rights puts survivors of gender-based violence at risk. AAUW urged Senators to vote NO, stressing the need for a leader who will expand opportunity, protect civil rights, and invest in students' success.

The Trump administration's sub-cabinet nominations further reveal its agenda to dismantle civil rights enforcement, weaken protections for students, and promote privatization of education. Each nominee has concerning past positions that call into question their commitment to gender equity in education.

- Nicholas Kent – Under Secretary of Education: Oversees postsecondary education and federal student aid policy. Former lobbyist for for-profit schools.
- Candice Jackson – Deputy General Counsel: Former Betsy DeVos appointee. Previously claimed most campus sexual assault cases stemmed from breakups or alcohol.
- Kimberly Richey – Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights: Consulted for Parents Defending Education; opposes Title IX protections and inclusive curricula.
- Craig Trainor – Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Office for Civil Rights: Aligned with groups opposing affirmative action and inclusion policies.
- Kevin O'Farrell – Assistant Secretary for Career and Technical Education: Tied to Linda McMahon's think tank; promotes privatized vocational pathways.