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CASE INSIGHT | Center for Litigation

McMAHON V. NEW YORK: RETURNING EDUCATION TO THE STATES

On July 14, 2025, the U.S. Supreme Court granted an emergency stay in *McMahon v. New York*, allowing the Trump Administration to proceed with large-scale workforce reductions at the Department of Education in an effort to return education policy to the states. The decision aligns with one of President Trump's campaign promises to shut down the federal Department of Education in favor of local control for schools. The Court's unsigned order lifts a lower court injunction and affirms the Executive Branch's broad discretion over federal personnel and agency structure.

The Case: The Trump Administration laid off hundreds of federal employees at the Department of Education. Former employees, backed by the State of New York, argued the plan was retaliatory and ideologically motivated. The Biden-appointed district judge in Massachusetts issued a preliminary injunction preventing the Trump Administration from implementing the layoffs, citing potential violations of civil service protections and constitutional due process; the First Circuit Court of Appeals denied the request to stay the injunction, and the Supreme Court reversed.

What Did The Court Find? Although the ruling came without a signed opinion, the 6-3 majority signaled courts should not interfere with internal executive branch personnel decisions absent clear violations of law. Political disagreements over policy or agency priorities are not grounds for emergency judicial intervention.

What's The Impact? The decision enables the Trump Administration to move forward with a sweeping downsizing and reorganization of the Department of Education, consistent with its stated goal of returning education policy to the states. It also sets a strong precedent limiting judicial intrusion into executive workforce decisions, particularly where administrative restructuring reflects lawful policy objectives.

What Did AFPI Have To Say?

Jessica Hart Steinmann, Executive General Counsel, praised the ruling, "Today's decision isn't just a win for constitutional governance—it's a win for students, parents, and local communities. By affirming the President's authority to restructure federal agencies, the Court has cleared the way for long-overdue reform at the Department of Education. AFPI supports this bold step because it puts power back where it belongs: in the hands of families and local school districts, not distant bureaucrats. Excellence in education starts with accountability to those closest to the classroom."

Erika Donalds, Chair for Education Opportunity, agreed, "The America First Policy Institute fully supports President Trump's decision to eliminate the U.S. Department of Education and restore authority to parents and local communities. Secretary McMahon's bold action to downsize this bloated federal bureaucracy marks a critical first step in this effort, and we applaud the Supreme Court for allowing this important reform to proceed."

