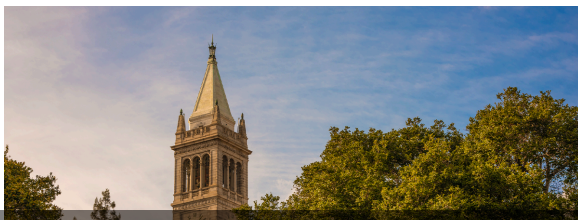


# University of California Researchers File Class Action Lawsuit Against the Trump Administration for the Illegal and Unconstitutional Termination of Critical Research Grants

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researchers have filed a class action in federal court against the Trump Administration on behalf of all UC researchers whose previously approved agency grants were terminated pursuant to Executive Orders or other directives of President Trump, as implemented through the Department of Government Efficiency (“DOGE”).

Plaintiffs seek a declaration that these grant terminations violate the constitutional principle of separation of powers, the First Amendment guarantee of free speech, and the Fifth Amendment guarantee of due process, as well as statutes that govern agencies’ missions and grantmaking and the Administrative Procedure Act. As detailed in the Complaint, these abrupt cancellations of already awarded grants “ignored or contradicted the purposes for which Congress created the granting agencies and appropriated funds, and dispensed with the regular procedures and due process afforded grantees under the Administrative Procedure Act, in implementing the Trump Administration’s political ‘cost-cutting’ agenda and ideological purity campaign.”

According to UC Berkeley Law Dean Erwin Chemerinsky, a leading constitutional law scholar and co-counsel on the case, “President Trump and DOGE have arbitrarily cut off funding to researchers throughout the University of California system in clear violation of the Constitution and



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enterprise as a whole, with potentially grave consequences to everyone in society who benefits from the research in a myriad of disciplines.”

As described by Plaintiff Dr. Neeta Thakur, a pulmonary and critical care specialist at UCSF, “The EPA has abruptly terminated a three-year grant that was supporting research on how wildfire smoke affects the lungs, heart, and brain of all Californians. My colleagues and I at UCSF and UC Berkeley have worked on this important project for two years, and its sudden end – communicated through a simple form letter – puts our progress in danger. This decision disrupts our ongoing work with community-based organizations and stops us from generating life-saving information designed to improve public health and protect the well-being of all Californians, especially those living in at-risk communities.”

Plaintiff Jemma Foreman, the Director of the Center for Environmental Learning at the Lawrence Hall of Science at UC Berkeley, explains, “My team and I at the Lawrence Hall of Science earned NSF grants to make science education more accessible to all learners. Instilling a love of science is critical to envisioning and creating a better future for us all. In one day, we lost two projects, and nearly 75% of our funding, because of terminations by NSF. A week later, NSF terminated yet another one of our

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These are just two of hundreds of examples of the damage wrought by the Trump Administration's illegal and unconstitutional terminations.

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California in San Francisco, seeks a return to the pre-Trump Administration process of orderly grantmaking that aligns with congressionally authorized purposes, and affords due process to grant-funded researchers. Plaintiffs seek, for themselves and the class of UC researchers who have suffered unlawful grant terminations, an injunction restoring their lost funding, providing them sufficient time to complete the work for which their grants were originally approved, and preventing further illegal grant terminations. Plaintiffs will be filing a motion for a temporary restraining order on June 5, 2025.

The case, No. 3:25-cv-4737, is assigned to the Honorable Rita F. Lin.

## Background on the Lawsuit

Each year, researchers in the UC system receive hundreds of millions of dollars in grants from the full spectrum of federal agencies, ranging from the Environmental Protection Agency to the National

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The grants have also been key to the innovation that has consistently earned the UC system pride of place among research institutions, including first place in the list of universities with the most utility patents. They have also made the UC Berkeley campus the number one ranked public research in institution in the world for nine of the past ten years.

Before President Trump took office, federal grantmaking proceeded under the authority of Congress, which appropriated taxpayer funds for specific public purposes. For decades, agencies carried out these statutory directives and observed due process in making, renewing, and (only seldom) terminating grants. They each adhered to their own grant regulations and followed Administrative Procedure Act processes when modifying such regulations. On the rare occasions when agencies terminated grants, they did so pursuant to predictable, regularized processes and terminated grants only for reasons stated in the regulations. All of this changed abruptly on January 20, 2025 (Inauguration Day).

After January 20, 2025, Defendants Donald J. Trump and DOGE, through a flurry of Executive Orders and other directives, commanded the Federal Agency Defendants to terminate scores of previously awarded research grants. As the Complaint notes, the “abrupt, wholesale, and

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withhold or redirect congressionally appropriated money; ignored statutory requirements that agencies fulfill their substantive missions and fund congressionally specified activities; contravened agency-specific grant-making regulations that cannot by law be revised on an abrupt, unexplained, chaotic basis; and violated the Administrative Procedure Act through this arbitrary, capricious, and ultra vires conduct.”

As further detailed in the Complaint, grounds the agencies have offered for such terminations were spurious. In some cases, agency correspondence to grantees asserted that grant termination would reduce public costs and promote government efficiency, although no evidence was provided to support this claim. In other cases, agency communications made it clear that grants were being terminated to further Defendant Trump’s political objectives, which included the elimination of research on climate, environmental justice, “gender ideology,” and “DEI.” These grant terminations are occurring not because the grant-funded research departed from its originally approved purpose, but because that purpose now offends the political agenda and ideological requirements of the Trump Administration. In terminating these grants, the agencies have violated the Constitution, numerous federal statutes, and their own regulations.

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staked careers and reputations; and for work with research teams through which they endeavored to train a next generation. These terminations have impaired and will impair the public-serving research mission of the UC system and the concern for public welfare that undergirds it. Named Plaintiffs and the Proposed Class will continue to suffer such harms on an ongoing basis, and will experience increasing and irreparable harm absent the court declaration and injunction they seek through this lawsuit.

## Source/Contact

Elizabeth J. Cabraser

LIEFF CABRASER HEIMANN & BERNSTEIN, LLP

Anthony P. Schoenberg

FARELLA BRAUN + MARTEL LLP



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## Contact Info

222 2nd Ave.  
South, Suite 1640  
Nashville,  
Tennessee 37201  
Phone: +1.615.313.9000  
Fax: +1.615.313.9965  
Email: mail@lchb.com  
Web: www.lieffcabraser.com

275 Battery  
Street, Suite 2900  
San Francisco, CA  
94111  
Phone: +1.415.956.1000  
Fax: +1.415.956.1008  
Email: mail@lchb.com  
Web: www.lieffcabraser.com

Frauenplatz 2,  
80331 Munich  
Germany  
Phone: +49.89.2555.2361  
Fax: +49.89.2555.2359  
Email: mail@lchb.com  
Web: munich.lieffcabraser.cc

250 Hudson  
Street, 8th Floor  
New York, NY  
10013  
Phone: +1.212.355.9500  
Fax: +1.212.355.9592  
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