



MAPPING THE SWAMP

A Study of
Administrative
State Personnel
2025 EDITION



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MAPPING THE SWAMP

A Study of Administrative State Personnel

NOVEMBER 2025



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US Senator Tom Coburn, MD
Washington, D.C. | March 11, 2014



“I know that restoring transparency is not only the surest way to achieve results, but also to earn back the trust in government...”

US Senator Barack Obama
Washington, D.C. | January 28, 2009





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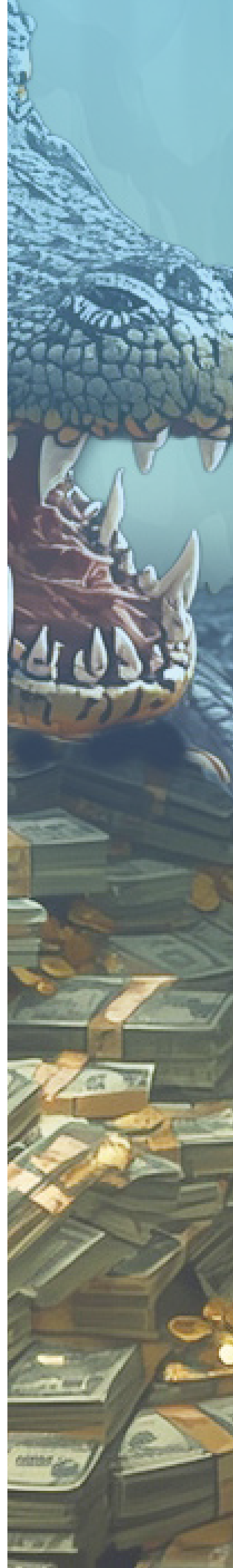
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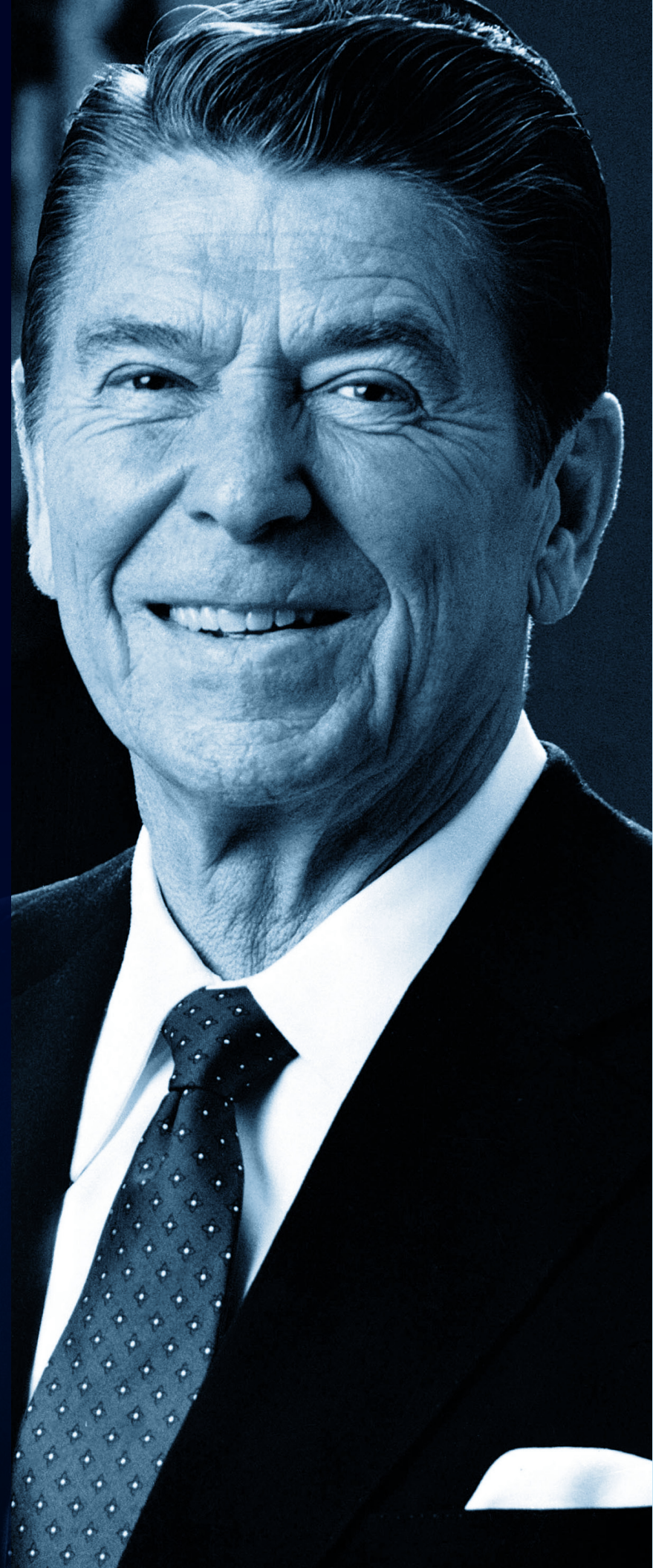
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***"It's hard,
when you're
up to your
armpits in
alligators, to
remember
you came
here to drain
the swamp."***

– President Ronald Reagan

1983



INTRODUCTION

Beginning in 2016, Open the Books first revealed the size, scope and power of the federal government, quantifying the federal bureaucracy with a depth no other organization attempts. Since then, we have routinely provided updates including in 2021 and 2023.

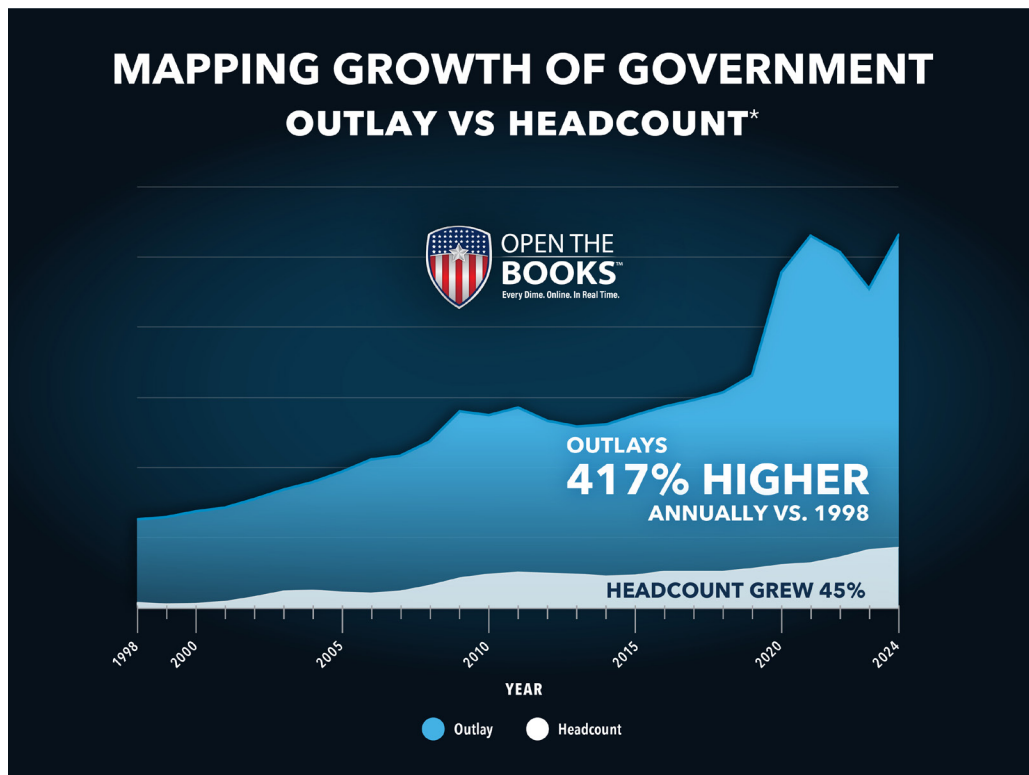
This year, we're once again updating taxpayers on the ways the administrative state ranks have grown and changed.

These reports go back to President Donald Trump's first campaign to "drain the swamp," echoing a sentiment that used to be bipartisan and expressed by everyone from President Ronald Reagan to former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Trump's second term started with new and more aggressive plans to drain the swamp - including the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

DOGE soon gained access to the Treasury Payment System, which records individual spending transactions in real time. That money belongs to American taxpayers, and excepting national security risks and personal privacy, they deserve to review it like they do their own bank accounts. Unfortunately, a long history of knee-jerk secrecy in the federal government makes the work of transparency and accountability difficult. As we will document in this report, redactions abound.

DOGE also followed a vision laid out by President Trump to root out the Biden administration's DEI commitments, targeting contracts they deemed as wasteful or ideologically motivated. They discovered the Biden administration, like academia, had aggressively built out a DEI infrastructure with dedicated employees across the administrative state. We lay out a case study at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in Appendix A.

As Open the Books has documented at HHS and elsewhere, spending on grants, contracts, mandatory programs, debt service and nearly everything else has skyrocketed while employee ranks have grown more modestly. Nevertheless, the headcount of federal employees has risen by 45% since 1998. As that bureaucracy has gotten bigger, it's also become more secretive and highly compensated. This report focuses on the payroll portion of the metaphorical Swamp Map.



What follows is the most comprehensive snapshot of the bureaucracy in the last full fiscal year of the Biden administration, FY 2024. It is a representation of the status quo before the second Trump administration began.

Scope and Methodology

This Open the Books oversight report on the federal payroll analyzed all publicly disclosed federal salaries in FY 2024. We found 2.9 million civil service employees with a total payroll of \$270 billion.

Our analysis utilized data provided mostly by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), but also by the United States Postal Service, the Department of Defense, and the White House via the Freedom of Information Act.

At the DOD, only civilian payrolls were subject to FOIA. Nevertheless, the production contains no employee names; all 761,624 of them are redacted.

Exempt from FOIA were the 1.3 million active-duty military members.

OPM refused to provide the payroll data for the following agencies and entities below—citing national security concerns, exceptions in the FOIA law, or lack of jurisdiction.

- Intelligence Agencies
- State Department employees in the Foreign Service
- Internal Revenue Service
- National Nuclear Security Administration, Department of Energy
- Bureau of Prisons

The Office of the Vice President claims not to be subject to FOIA and is not listed on the FOIA website.¹



¹ foia.gov/agency-search.html

TOP 5 TAKEAWAYS

1. Expensive Bureaucracy

The disclosed federal workforce costs the American taxpayer \$673,000 per minute, \$40.4 million per hour, and just under \$1 billion per day.

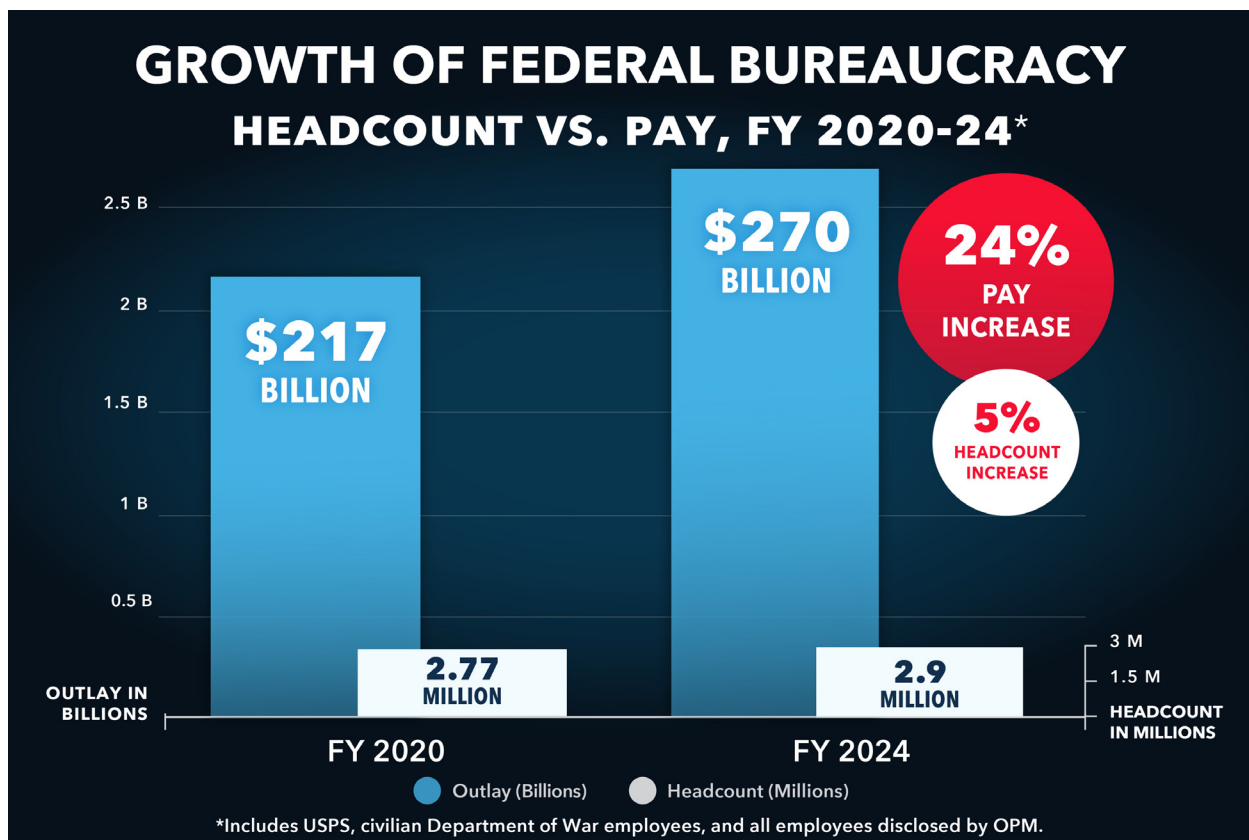
In FY 2024, the federal government disclosed 2.9 million employees. That includes over 1.5 million executive agency bureaucrats, 761,624 Department of Defense employees, and 638,007 United States Postal Service employees for an estimated total cost of \$351 billion.

Total base pay reported was \$270 billion for disclosed employees, and benefits cost an estimated 30% on top of that figure.

2. The Swamp Gets Bigger

The 2.9 million disclosed employees in the executive agencies, DOD and USPS rose to a modern-day high. The headcount grew 5% from 2.8 million employees in FY 2020.

In fact, while the number of federal employees grew by 5%, payroll grew nearly five times as much (24%) during the same time period.



3. Highly Paid Bureaucrats

Of the 2.1 million employees in the executive agencies and USPS (non-DOD) in FY 2024, **793,537 people** made \$100,000 or more. That's a 49% increase from the 532,784 people making six figures in FY 2020.

There were **68,445 employees** who earned \$200,000 or more – an 82% increase from 37,631 in FY 2020.

Those making \$300,000 or more numbered at **14,143** – an 84% increase from 7,692 in FY 2020.

The highest paid bureaucrat is cardiologist Gary H. Gibbons, Director of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute at the National Institutes of Health. He earned \$519,246 last year.

4. A New Minimum Wage

The average pay exceeded \$100,000 in 117 of 127 executive agencies, as well as the White House.

In FY 2024, there were 31,452 federal employees who out-earned every governor of the 50 states. That includes the highest paid, New York Governor Kathy Hochul, who collects a \$250,000 salary.

5. Transparency Issues - A Record Number of Payroll Redactions

In the FY 2024 payroll, the names of 383,000 people working in 56 agencies were redacted, representing \$38.3 billion in pay.

That's on top of the entire \$62.8 billion, 761,624-person Department of Defense civilian payroll where all names were redacted.

That 383,000 figure grew from the 259,000 names that were redacted in FY 2020.

We received no payroll production of the almost 1.4 million DOD active military members.

TOP PAID FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

In FY 2024, there were 31,452 (non-DOD) federal employees who out-earned every governor of the 50 states. That includes the highest paid, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, who collects a \$250,000 salary.

That's compared to the 26,835 people in FY 2020 who outearned New York's governor, who was then making \$225,000.

Of the 2.1 million non-DOD employees in FY 2024, **793,537 people** made \$100,000 or more, a 49% increase from the 532,784 people making six figures in FY 2020.

There were **68,445 employees** who earned \$200,000 or more – an 82% increase from 37,631 in FY 2020.

Those making \$300,000 or more numbered at **14,144**—an 84% increase from 7,692 in FY 2020.

Of the 127 executive agencies provided by U.S. Office of Personnel Management, as well as the Department of Defense (civil staff), United States Postal Service and the White House payrolls, all but 13 had an average pay over \$100,000.

Outearning the President

In 2024, there were 956 federal employees¹ who made more than the President of the United States, who donates his \$400,000 salary.

Of them, 939 were medical officers at the Veterans Health Administration, which provides care for 9.1 million veterans across 1,380 facilities.

There were also 15 doctors at the National Institutes of Health earning more than \$400,000, including the four highest paid employees in the entire federal workforce.

Two more people outearned the president: Micah Nix, an emergency room doctor with the Indian Health Service, part of the Department of Health and Human Services, and one other redacted employee working at the Bureau of Prisons, part of the Department of Justice.

The 956 employees are spread across 48 different states. California is home to 162 of them. Florida is in second place with 59, and North Carolina has 50. Five of the top six highest paid federal employees work in Maryland.

The count of 956 employees does not include an additional 36 people who earned exactly the same \$400,000 salary as the president.

¹ realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2025/03/31/waste_of_the_day_almost_1000_federal_workers_outearned_the_president_1100775.html

Top 20 Agencies by Average Pay • FY 2024

TOP 20 FEDERAL AGENCIES BY AVERAGE PAY • FISCAL YEAR 2024



DEPARTMENT/AGENCY	AVERAGE PAY	STAFF #
Commodity Futures Trading Commission	\$236,006	721
Securities and Exchange Commission	\$213,869	4,843
Office of the Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator	\$195,600	2
Public Buildings Reform Board	\$191,899	7
Arctic Research Commission	\$191,724	2
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau	\$187,120	1,851
Federal Housing Finance Agency	\$186,052	799
Federal Reserve System	\$184,536	1,688
Civil Rights Cold Case Review Board	\$181,903	5
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board	\$180,398	115
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	\$173,627	6,036
World War 1 Centennial Commission	\$169,364	4
Millennium Challenge Corporation	\$169,220	342
Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board	\$167,690	32
Federal Communications Commission	\$167,030	1,535
Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council	\$167,010	19
Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board	\$166,770	20
Surface Transportation Board	\$166,091	124
Office of Management and Budget	\$164,715	811
Federal Trade Commission	\$164,468	1,302

FROM BIDEN TO TRUMP, WHITE HOUSE PAYROLL SHRINKS 29%

President Joseph Biden's White House payroll in 2024 had the distinction of being the most expensive payroll in history, with the largest headcount since Richard Nixon was president.

Biden spent \$62.2 million on 565 people working in the White House—29% more than President Donald Trump is spending on the first year of his second non-consecutive term.

Trump's 404 staffers¹ are taking home \$44.1 million in 2025, the least costly payroll since at least 2009 when adjusting for inflation.

But he is paying some of them very well.

In fact, 35 staffers made at least \$195,000. Only one Biden staffer made that much in 2024, and nobody earned that much in the final year of Trump's first term.

Vice President's Office Still a FOIA Blind Spot

The payroll report contains no information about staff in the Office of the Vice President (OVP).

That's because the OVP claims to be exempt from the Freedom of Information Act. Open the Books has tried unsuccessfully² in the past to obtain the salaries through open records requests, and has accessed limited payroll information in the semi-annual Report of the Secretary of the Senate.

In the most recent report³ covering Oct. 1, 2024, through March 31, 2025, we can see that Kamala Harris ended her stay in the office with 43 staffers, while J.D. Vance began his vice presidential term with 23 staffers.

The FOIA website⁴ does not allow users to search the Office of the Vice President.

We encourage the OVP to be transparent and release this data so taxpayers can easily see how the Vice President's staff is spending public funds and hold a key part of the administration accountable.

¹ openthebooks.substack.com/p/trump-white-house-payroll-shrinks

² openthebooks.substack.com/p/vp-kamala-harris-had-92-percent-staff

³ govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CDOC-119sdoc3/pdf/GPO-CDOC-119sdoc3.pdf

⁴ foia.gov/agency-search.html

TRANSPARENCY ISSUES

“Name Withheld” by OPM or Agency

In the FY 2024 payroll, OPM provided the payroll for 127 agencies and either it or the individual agency redacted a total of 383,000 names worth \$38.3 billion in pay throughout 56 agencies.

DOD redacted its entire 761,624-person civilian payroll, costing \$62.8 billion.

The 1,144,624 names combined represent 39% of the entire federal headcount (including USPS and White House) and the \$101 billion combined payroll represents 37% of total federal payroll provided.

The heavy-handed DOD redactions beg further scrutiny given these employees are civilians and history has demonstrated their information can be uncovered elsewhere.

For example, Open the Books spent two years investigating DEI and social-emotional learning programs at the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), the K-12 school system that serves military families. We submitted a FOIA for the employment contract of the first-ever chief DEI officer at DoDEA, Kelisa Wing, and ascertained her pay and benefits. Yet the entire civilian payroll is wiped of names when we ask for it.

In other words, the feds are redacting names of employees whose information is *already public* through other means.

Read More: [“Diversity Whack-a-Mole: Controversial DOD Employee Pops Back up at Education Department”¹](#)

The 383,000 redacted names mark an uptick from 259,000 in FY 2020. It also represents a continued climb from our most recent previous examination. The FY 2022 federal payroll saw the Biden administration redacting 350,860 rank-and-file employees. Following the pandemic lockdowns that moved many employees to remote work, 281,000 worksites were also redacted that year. Who are these employees and—as importantly—where in the world are they working?

All of these recent figures mark an exponentially growing transparency problem: These redactions have absolutely skyrocketed since FY 2016. At the midpoint of the Obama administration, a mere 2,300 names were redacted² from the payroll produced by OPM.

¹ openthebooks.substack.com/p/diversity-whack-a-mole-controversial?utm_source=publication-search

² openthebooks.com/the-wall-street-journal-governments-war-on-transparency/

56 Agencies Redacted Some Staff Names

REDACTIONS BY AGENCY • FY 2024	
DEPARTMENT/AGENCY	REDACTIONS
Armed Forces Retirement Home	2
Chemical Safety Hazard Investigation Board	16
Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled	4
Commodity Futures Trading Commission	35
Consumer Product Safety Commission	167
Corporation for National and Community Service	9
Council of the Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency	3
Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency	2
Department of Agriculture	1163
Department of Commerce	652
Department of Education	101
Department of Energy	373
Department of Health and Human Services	1030
Department of Homeland Security	167431
Department of Housing and Urban Development	162
Department of Interior	2331
Department of Justice	102415
Department of Labor	1253
Department of State	586
Department of Transportation	1152
Department of Treasury	95699
Department of Veterans Affairs	6542
Development Finance Corporation	10
Environmental Protection Agency	276
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	137
Export Import Bank of the U.S.	7
Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board	3
Federal Communications Commission	4

REDACTIONS BY AGENCY • FY 2024 (CONTINUED)

DEPARTMENT/AGENCY	REDACTIONS
Federal Deposit Insurance Corp	71
Federal Election Commission	2
Federal Housing Finance Agency	40
Federal Maritime Commission	9
Federal Reserve System	9
Federal Trade Commission	44
General Services Administration	69
Government Printing Office	59
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	3
National Archives and Records Administration	81
National Labor Relations Board	14
National Science Foundation	14
National Transportation Safety Board	97
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	311
Office of National Drug Control Policy	2
Office of Personnel Management	38
Office of the Special Counsel	2
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative	2
Peace Corps	12
Pensions Benefit Guaranty Corporation	7
Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Commission	1
Railroad Retirement Board	23
Securities and Exchange Commission	43
Small Business Administration	112
Smithsonian Institution	39
Social Security Administration	250
U.S. Agency for International Development	73
U.S. Agency for Global Media	2

Senator Seeks Answers on Timecard Thieves, Redactions



Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA), Chair of the Senate DOGE Caucus and a member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, penned a letter¹ to OPM Director Scott Kuper on September 23, 2025 seeking answers to questions about federal employees double dipping and redactions of hundreds of thousands of names and worksites.

Ernst noted that when she teamed up with Open the Books to inspect the 2022 federal payroll, the Biden administration had redacted the names of **350,860 rank-and-file employees**, as well as **281,000 worksites**.

The senator was investigating the exact locations of the federal employees who were pulling paychecks from more than one federal agency.

From the letter:

"While some government managers do not know, or even care, where their employees are, I tried tracking down the exact locations of the federal workforce with the help of the non-profit transparency group Open the Books. The quest turned into a game of bureaucrat hide-and-seek with the Biden administration redacting the names of **350,861** rank-and-file employees and the worksites of over **281,000** bureaucrats.

"The public, who is paying the salaries of federal employees and contractors, deserves access to this information and the federal government. The U.S. Senate, House of Representatives, and White House all publicly post the names, titles, and salaries of employees. There are also a number of privately-run, searchable websites containing employment histories for many employees of both the executive and legislative branches of the federal government.

"Because OPM oversees policies related to hiring and managing the federal workforce, your agency is best situated to provide the leadership necessary to increase transparency and stop the timecard fraud by double-billing bureaucrats."

¹ ernst.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/opm_workforce_092325.pdf

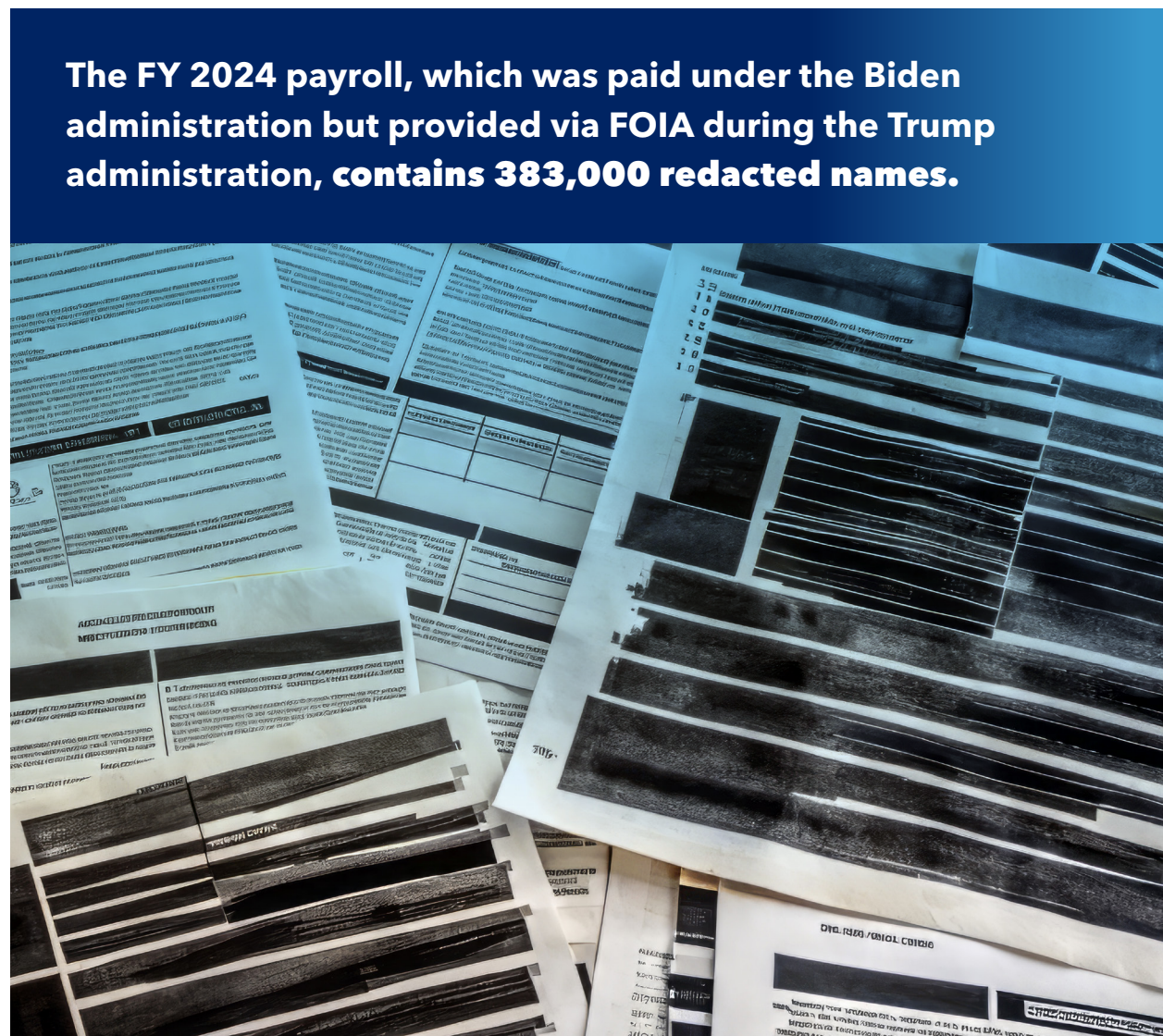
Senator Ernst found examples of a HUD employee holding other full-time government contractor jobs, billing taxpayers for more than 24 hours of work in a day. Another person, a senior human resources official at the Peace Corps, was working as a contractor for the Federal Housing and Finance Agency and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

With more examples of timecard thieves “two-timing” the federal government, Ernst is seeking OPM’s help in fighting it.

Ernst also requested that the agency begin posting pay data publicly online in a searchable format by agency and location, along with other fields.

She asked for an explanation for the Biden-era redactions reported by Open the Books.

But the redaction issue persists.



The FY 2024 payroll, which was paid under the Biden administration but provided via FOIA during the Trump administration, contains 383,000 redacted names.

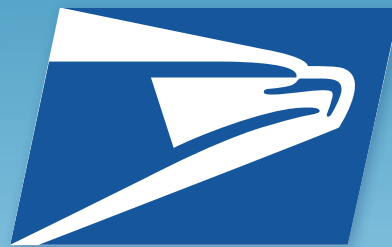
FEDERAL EMPLOYEES BY DEPARTMENT/AGENCY

There were almost 3 million civil servants employed across 127 departments and agencies, as well as DOD, USPS and the White House.

While almost one out of every three departments and agencies had 1,000 employees or more, the two largest ones (Department of Defense & U.S. Postal Service) employed almost half of the federal workforce. And 90 percent of all federal employees worked for the top 10 departments.

TOP 10 FEDERAL AGENCIES

Employ 90% of all federal workers



The Department of Defense and U.S. Postal Service employ nearly 50% of the federal workforce.



Top 20 Departments and Agencies by Employee Count

FY 2024 vs. FY 2020

TOP 20 FEDERAL AGENCIES BY EMPLOYEE COUNT • FY 2024 VS. FY 2020



DEPARTMENT/AGENCY	EMPLOYEE COUNT		TOTAL PAY	
Department of Defense (civilian)	761,624	(+9%) ↑	\$62,846,256,299	(+27%) ↑
U.S. Postal Service	638,007	(-6%) ↓	\$40,947,500,450	(+11%) ↑
Department of Veterans Affairs	483,006	(+15%) ↑	\$50,981,496,641	(+38%) ↑
Department of Homeland Security	222,310	(+6%) ↑	\$22,880,265,563	(+26%) ↑
Department of Justice	116,073	(-0.4%) ↓	\$13,158,171,722	(+16%) ↑
Department of Treasury	108,819	(+13%) ↑	\$10,265,109,738	(+26%) ↑
Department of Agriculture	91,658	(+10%) ↑	\$7,953,151,030	(+25%) ↑
Department of Health & Human Services	90,847	(+19%) ↑	\$11,827,798,271	(+39%) ↑
Department of Interior	62,866	(+4%) ↑	\$5,897,157,386	(+20%) ↑
Social Security Administration	59,129	(-4%) ↓	\$5,810,763,533	(+11%) ↑
Department of Transportation	55,804	(+3%) ↑	\$7,816,216,337	(+19%) ↑
Department of Commerce	47,618	(-8%) ↓	\$5,838,489,752	(+13%) ↑
National Aeronautics & Space Administration	18,064	(+1%) ↑	\$2,693,391,670	(+15%) ↑
Environmental Protection Agency	16,330	(+9%) ↑	\$2,184,689,478	(+20%) ↑
Department of Labor	14,727	(+5%) ↑	\$1,789,635,835	(+20%) ↑
Department of Energy	14,410	(+20%) ↑	\$2,058,257,896	(+37%) ↑
Department of State	14,193	(+19%) ↑	\$1,882,719,787	(+35%) ↑
General Services Administration	12,936	(+11%) ↑	\$1,670,881,756	(+26%) ↑
Department of Housing & Urban Development	8,823	(+11%) ↑	\$1,188,190,145	(+27%) ↑
Small Business Administration	7,878	(-26%) ↓	\$739,364,901	(-3%) ↓

↑ Up Since 2020 ↓ Down Since 2020

Obscure Agencies FY 2024 vs. FY 2020

Among the 127 federal departments and agencies, we found entities that may be unfamiliar to many Americans. Still, these bureaucracies employed thousands of workers for billions of dollars in pay. Here are some examples.

OBSCURE FEDERAL AGENCIES FY 2024 VS. FY 2020 				
AGENCY	EMPLOYEE COUNT		TOTAL PAY	
U.S. Agency For Global Media	1,287	(-6%) ↓	\$176,305,341	(+9%) ↑
Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp.	974	(+2%) ↑	\$144,660,100	(+19%) ↑
Fed Retirement Thrift Investment Board	242	(-18%) ↓	\$37,939,742	(-3%) ↓
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative	259	(+0%) —	\$41,283,085	(+12%) ↑
International Boundary and Water Commission	257	(+12%) ↑	\$21,496,281	(+30%) ↑
Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	201	(-7%) ↓	\$28,618,065	(+5%) ↑
Federal Mine Safety & Health Review Commission	59	(+0%) —	\$7,995,299	(+10%) ↑
African Development Foundation	30	(-17%) ↓	\$3,506,526	(-6%) ↓
Denali Commission	15	(-29%) ↓	\$2,246,929	(-20%) ↓
Japan-United States Friendship Commission	14	(+17%) ↑	\$1,979,315	(+61%) ↑
Arctic Research Commission	2	(-75%) ↓	\$383,448	(-69%) ↓
Appalachian Regional Commission	5	(+0%) —	\$767,262	(+3%) ↑
↑ Up Since 2020 ↓ Down Since 2020 — No Change Since 2020				

CASE STUDIES: 10 LARGEST DEPARTMENTS



Department of War (Department of Defense)

Total employees: **761,624**

Total base compensation: **\$62.8 billion**

MISSION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WAR (AS OF SEPT. 5, 2025¹):

The Department of War is America's largest government agency. With our military tracing its roots back to pre-Revolutionary times, the department has grown and evolved with our nation. Our mission is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and ensure our nation's security.

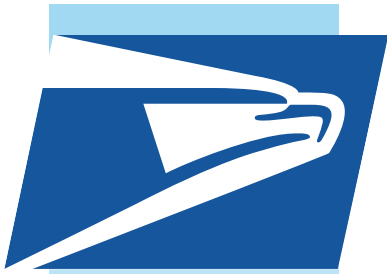
MISSION OF WHAT WAS FORMERLY KNOWN AS DOD:

Provide the military forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of the United States. Since the creation of America's first army in 1775, the Department and its predecessor organizations have evolved into a global presence of three million individuals, stationed in more than 140 countries and dedicated to defending the United States by deterring and defeating aggression and coercion in critical regions. The Department embraces the core values of leadership, professionalism, and technical knowledge. Its employees are dedicated to duty, integrity, ethics, honor, courage, and loyalty.

KEY FACTS:

- Average compensation: **\$82,516**
- Average compensation with benefits (est. 30%): **\$107,270**
- Number of employees earning over \$100K: **189,262**

¹ [whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/09/restoring-the-united-states-department-of-war/](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/09/restoring-the-united-states-department-of-war/)



United States Postal Service

Total employees: **638,007**

Total base compensation: **\$40.9 billion**

MISSION:

The Postal Service's mission is to provide the nation with reliable, affordable, universal mail service. To bind the Nation together through the personal, educational, literary and business correspondence of the people. It shall provide prompt, reliable and efficient services to patrons in all areas and shall render postal services to all communities.

KEY FACTS:

- Average compensation: **\$64,180**
- Average compensation with benefits (est. 30%): **\$83,434**
- Number of employees earning over \$100K: **17,336**



Department of Veterans Affairs

Total employees: **483,006**

Total base compensation: **\$50.9 billion**

MISSION:

To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.

KEY FACTS:

- Average compensation: **\$105,202**
- Average compensation with benefits (est. 30%): **\$136,762**
- Number of employees earning over \$100K: **303,755**



Department of Homeland Security

Total employees: **222,309**

Total base compensation: **\$22.9 billion**

MISSION:

With honor and integrity, we will safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values.

KEY FACTS:

- Average compensation: **\$102,921**
- Average compensation with benefits (est. 30%): **\$133,797**
- Number of employees earning over \$100K: **116,325**



Department of Justice

Total employees: **116,072**

Total base compensation: **\$13.2 billion**

MISSION:

The mission of the Department of Justice is to uphold the rule of law, to keep our country safe, and to protect civil rights.

KEY FACTS:

- Average compensation: **\$113,363**
- Average compensation with benefits (est. 30%): **\$147,371**
- Number of employees earning over \$100K: **62,829**



Department of Treasury

Total employees: 108,819

Total base compensation: \$10.3 billion

MISSION:

Maintain a strong economy and create economic and job opportunities by promoting the conditions that enable economic growth and stability at home and abroad, strengthen national security by combating threats and protecting the integrity of the financial system, and manage the U.S. Government's finances and resources effectively.

KEY FACTS:

- Average compensation: **\$94,332**
- Average compensation with benefits (est. 30%): **\$122,631**
- Number of employees earning over \$100K: **42,090**



Department of Agriculture

Total employees: **91,658**

Total base compensation: **\$7.9 billion**

MISSION:

We have a vision to provide economic opportunity through innovation, helping rural America to thrive; to promote agriculture production that better nourishes Americans while also helping feed others throughout the world; and to preserve our Nation's natural resources through conservation, restored forests, improved watersheds, and healthy private working lands.

KEY FACTS:

- Average compensation: **\$86,770**
- Average compensation with benefits (est. 30%): **\$112,801**
- Number of employees earning over \$100K: **28,552**



Department of Health and Human Services

Total employees: **90,847**

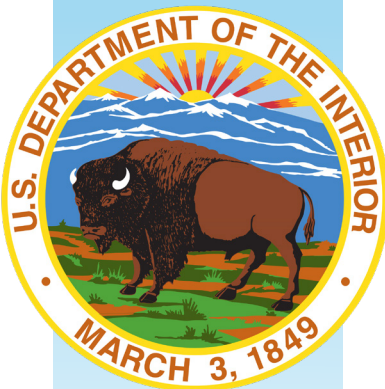
Total base compensation: **\$11.8 billion**

MISSION:

Enhance the health and well-being of all Americans, by providing for effective health and human services and by fostering sound, sustained advances in the sciences underlying medicine, public health and social services.

KEY FACTS:

- Average compensation: **\$130,196**
- Average compensation with benefits (est. 30%): **\$169,254**
- Number of employees earning over \$100K: **65,941**



Department of Interior

Total employees: **62,866**

Total base compensation: **\$5.9 billion**

MISSION:

The U.S. Department of the Interior protects and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and affiliated Island Communities.

KEY FACTS:

- Average compensation: **\$93,806**
- Average compensation with benefits (est. 30%): **\$121,947**
- Number of employees earning over \$100K: **24,230**



Social Security Administration

Total employees: **59,129**

Total base compensation: **\$5.8 billion**

MISSION:

We are passionate about helping you by delivering financial support, providing superior customer service, and ensuring the security of your information—helping you secure today and tomorrow.

KEY FACTS:

- Average compensation: **\$98,124**
- Average compensation with benefits (est. 30%): **\$127,561**
- Number of employees earning over \$100K: **24,604**



CONCLUSION



For all the talk of draining the swamp, it has not only grown over the past decade but has become even murkier.

In a July 2025 Substack investigation, we delved into the prohibitively long wait time for taxpayer public records requests. In many cases, the wait times make it impossible to use the findings to hold the administrative state accountable for its actions and spending habits.

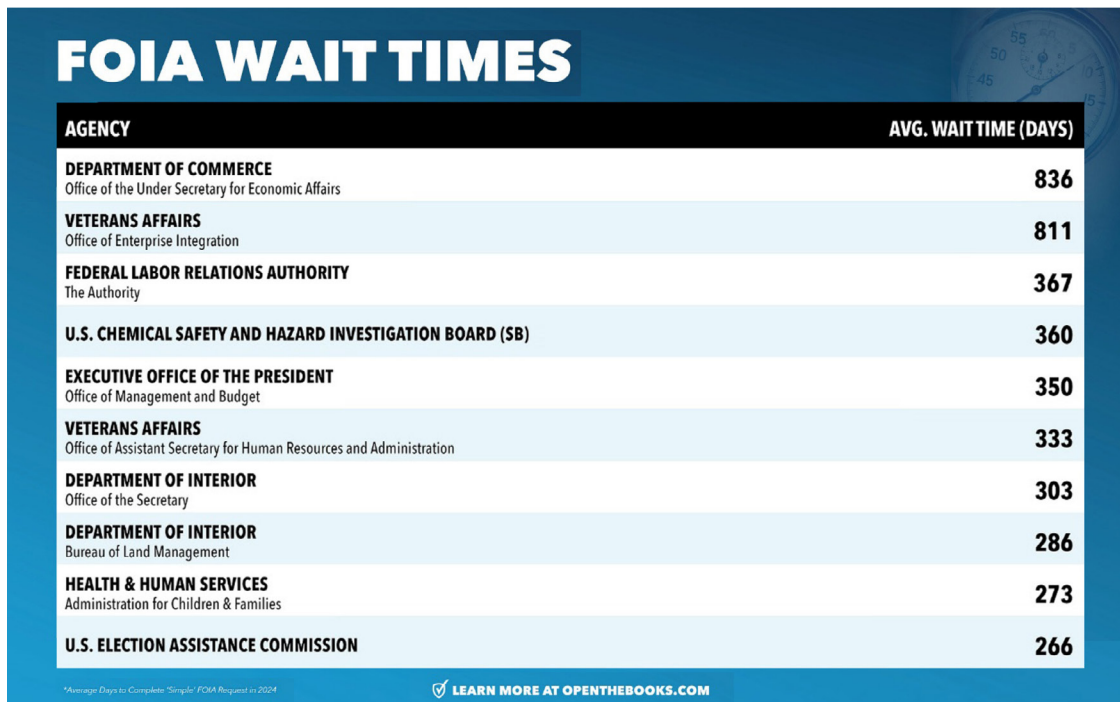
Excerpted from "40 Months? The Eternal FOIA Backlog:"¹

One of the key commitments of the Trump administration is to find enormous efficiencies in federal spending by rooting out waste, fraud, abuse and self-dealing. But in order for those changes to be enduring, the feds must also radically improve transparency when it comes to public records requests.

According to new data obtained by Open the Books, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests last year that were labeled "complex" had an average response time of 267 days across 416 agencies. "Simple" requests took an average of 39 days for an initial response, but 31 agencies still took in excess of 100 days on average. At two agencies, that number was **more than 800 days**. 100 business days is roughly five calendar months. 800 is an astonishing 40 months, or more than 3 years. It's simply unacceptable."

¹ openthebooks.substack.com/p/40-months-the-eternal-foia-backlog

The following chart shows the federal agencies with the longest wait times for a “simple” FOIA request:



Not only does it take too long to find out how our tax dollars are being spent, but agencies lean too heavily on a set of exemptions that allow them to withhold or redact information. Many of the record 383,000 hidden names among the civilian workforce were redacted under FOIA exemption 6, citing “privacy concerns.” Remarkably, OPM itself redacted 38 names. National security concerns are certainly understandable, but these names are hidden at places like the Peace Corps, the Railroad Retirement Board and the Smithsonian Institution. Why do those employees need to be immune from taxpayer oversight?

A fix for the transparency gap is urgently needed, particularly in light of an administrative state that’s living increasingly high on the hog. The uppermost pay bands continue to grow, with 82% more bureaucrats earning at least \$200,000 versus FY 2020. With Dr. Anthony Fauci in retirement, a new top paid bureaucrat is taking home an astonishing \$519,246 in FY 2024 to lead the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. While the civilian workforce grew 5% since FY 2020, pay grew 24%.

Even before considering the Pentagon’s entirely redacted list of civilian employees, the remaining 383,000 represents \$38.3 billion worth of public pay. Taxpayers must be able to better understand who these employees are, how they perform, what their roles provide for the public good, and where they do their work.

In order to drain the swamp effectively, taxpayers must be able to see through the silt and measure the depth.

APPENDIX A: THE DEI PROLIFERATION IN THE BIDEN ERA

Last year Open the Books examined the expenditures at one major Cabinet department, the Department of Health and Human Services, on “diversity, equity, and inclusion” (DEI) ideology alone.

It stemmed from an Executive Order signed by President Biden directing agency leaders to prioritize DEI when recruiting and promoting staff and led to a “whole of government” approach to advancing that dogma. Although the report utilized FY 2023 salary data at the time, all 294 DEI staffers remained employed as of late 2024.

The following report was originally published on Substack on November 12, 2024.

Diversifying Douclas?! HHS Spends Hundreds of Millions Spreading DEI Through Medical Community

“Equity” concept appears 829 times in Department’s 2025 budget request, reaching academia, bureaucrats, researchers, and care providers.



The private sector is learning the hard—and costly—way that much of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion model is discriminatory and subject to expensive litigation. That has corporations “quietly altering” their approach, according to the Associated Press.¹ While federal agencies have also faced a mountain of legal challenges,² the Biden administration has nevertheless pressed on with the President’s commitment to a “whole of government” DEI effort.

The Department of Health and Human Services, with a budget surpassed only by the Pentagon, employs 294 DEI staffers at an annual cost of \$38.7 MILLION.

That doesn’t even include another **\$29.4 million in payroll for seven Offices of Minority Health** embedded within various HHS agencies!

While their roles are dedicated to DEI, related efforts have permeated through virtually every area of the department.

Variations of the term “equity” appear an astonishing 829 times in the department’s 2025 budget request to Congress, impacting hundreds of millions of dollars of spending programs.

Resulting funds pour out across the country to achieve equity and “justice” in public health. They flow to Black churches recruited to push vaccinations; to universities for hiring diverse researchers; and to special outreach for anyone from criminals, to the LGBTQ+ community, to the indigenous, and...doulas??

Background

President Joe Biden signed Executive Order 14035³ in June 2021, calling on every federal agency to make “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” a “priority” when recruiting and promoting staff.

In response, the Department of Health and Human Services promised to dedicate **313 employees to DEI in 2023**—spread across not one, not two, but **eight** separate DEI offices.

For the first time Open the Books has quantified the total DEI payroll at HHS, revealing the staggering \$38.7 million expense. This figure captures 294 employees—very near to fulfilling the department’s promise to President Biden!

¹ apnews.com/article/dei-diversity-corporations-affirmative-action-309864f08e6ec63a45d18ca5f25d7540

² archive.ph/q2mrP#selection-669.188-728.0

³ whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/06/25/executive-order-on-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-the-federal-workforce/

THE DEI HEIRARCHY

We identified 92 DEI employees working directly under HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra, most of them at the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity, Diversity & Inclusion.

Seven subagencies, like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), have separate diversity offices with their own complex infrastructure of 202 employees, for a grand total of 294.

Most of these workers—247 of them—made over \$100,000 in base salary for FY 2023. Four of them made more than \$200,000. Benefits typically represent an additional 30% of base salaries.

The Food and Drug Administration¹ alone has three separate related DEI entities:

- **An Office of EEO and Diversity Management**
- **A DEI Working Group**
- **A DEI Center of Excellence.**

The FDA also has the department's highest paid DEI staffer: EEO/Diversity Director Lakeisha McClendon made \$221,000 in 2023.

Over at the NIH, the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is organized like a full corporation. It has separate departments for Guidance, Education & Marketing, Data Analytics & Customer Outreach...and an inexplicably redundant "Diversity & Inclusion Division."

¹ [fda.gov/media/170844/download](https://www.fda.gov/media/170844/download)

DEI EMPLOYEES BY AGENCY

AGENCY	DEI EMPLOYEES	DEI PAYROLL 2023	OFFICE TITLE
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	92	\$12,985,279	Office of Equal Employment Opportunity, Diversity & Inclusion
ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES	10	\$1,477,976	Office of Diversity Management & Equal Employment Opportunity
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION	43	\$5,492,274	Office of Equal Employment Opportunity & Workplace Equity
CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES	32	\$3,936,103	Office of Equal Opportunity & Civil Rights
FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION	24	\$3,008,123	Office of Equal Employment Opportunity & Diversity Management
HEALTH RESOURCES & SERVICES ADMINISTRATION	25	\$3,309,146	Office of Civil Rights, Diversity & Inclusion
INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE	16	\$1,872,944	Diversity Management & Equal Employment Opportunity
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH	52	\$6,536,399	Office of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
TOTAL	294	\$38,504,594	

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NOTE: The above costs may still be undercounting: HHS lists 52 diversity employees in its staff directory¹ whose salaries are not listed in our open records request for the agency's 2023 payroll. The department did not answer whether they were new hires, had left the department, or were omitted from their records production.

EEO VS DEI: A MERGER OF ACRONYMS?

Normally, DEI offices are separate from Equal Employment Opportunity offices. The latter enforces a 1972 federal law designed to ensure fair and equal treatment in the workplace. DEI, on the other hand, is ostensibly designed to create inclusive environments that take various perspectives into account, but in practice promotes oppressors-versus-oppressed narratives and monomaniacally fixates on supposed "privileges" (or lack thereof) conferred by sexual, racial and gender "identities." DEI posits that people should not be treated equally but rather treated more favorably based on their identification with groups deemed to be "oppressed."

HHS somehow combines these two conflicting premises into one office.

¹ directory.psc.gov/employee.htm

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services is the only health agency whose EEO office does not also have the word “diversity” in its title, but its director Anita Pinder serves as its “chief diversity officer.”

Now, even staff with innocuous job titles like “EEO Consultant” are working under the federal government’s DEI banner.

For example, HHS’ Office of Civil Rights¹ describes itself as a department to “enforce federal civil rights laws, conscience and religious freedom laws.” But its 2025 budget request includes \$4.8 million to “assess the impact of HHS’s policies and its regulatory role in health equity barriers for underserved populations.” It’s not clear how health equity is covered under the enforcement of civil rights law.

More efforts around health equity are encompassed in a second set of staffers, within the Offices of Minority Health.

MINORITY HEALTH & ADDRESSING INJUSTICES

Yet another set of staffers populate various Offices of Minority Health. Their mission is to “improve the health of racial and ethnic minority populations through the development of health policies and programs that will help eliminate health disparities.”

Open the Books identified 207 employees making \$29.4 million, 182 of whom made over \$100,000. Again, the vast majority of them were making six-figure salaries.

These programs have existed since 1985, but the Biden administration² has now encouraged them to champion health equity:³ “the state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health” by “addressing historical and contemporary injustices.”

Eliseo Pérez-Stable, director of the NIH’s Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, was the highest-paid by far with a \$385,000 salary last year.

¹ ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/smartscreen/main.jsf#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20Department%20of%20Health,Safety%20Act%20and%20Rule%2C%20which

² hhs.gov/about/news/2023/11/16/biden-harris-administration-takes-action-improve-health-and-wellbeing-addressing-social-determinants-health.html

³ cdc.gov/healthequity/whatis/index.html

MINORITY HEALTH EMPLOYEES BY AGENCY

AGENCY	MINORITY HEALTH EMPLOYEES	PAYROLL	OFFICE TITLE
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	16	\$2,482,564	Office of Minority Health; Office of Environmental Justice; Office of Climate Change & Health Equity
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION	42	\$5,626,966	Office of Health Equity
CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES	37	\$4,939,595	Office of Minority Health
FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION	11	\$1,591,902	Office of Minority Health & Health Equity
HEALTH RESOURCES & SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (HRSA)	8	\$1,151,133	Office of Health Equity
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH	88	\$12,828,936	National Institute on Minority Health & Health Disparities
SUBSTANCE ABUSE & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION	5	\$787,535	Office of Behavioral Health Equity
TOTAL	207	\$29,408,631	

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EXAMPLE: MINORITY HEALTH AT THE CDC

The CDC represents a textbook case of how Minority Health ethos has transformed over the last few years. The CDC's Office of Minority Health was founded in 1988. But in 2021, the office gained a new purpose:¹ pushing all medical researchers to incorporate "diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging" into their scientific work.

The office "declared racism a serious public health threat" and within two years had renamed itself to the Office of Health Equity.

One recent CDC program² pushed for "vaccine equity" in Atlanta, Georgia by distributing 5,500 monkeypox vaccine doses to Black "LGBTQ+ men who have sex with men" to help "celebrate diversity and the impact of distinctly Black gay and queer culture on the community."

¹ [cdc.gov/healthequity/core/fact-sheet/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/core/fact-sheet/index.html)

² archive.org/web/20221219195005/https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/whatis/healthequityinaction/topics/grassroots.html

The CDC has even deployed to Black churches¹ in the name of “vaccine equity.” The agency “trained” 4,300 faith leaders as “vaccine advocates and influencers” who could convince their congregations to get vaccinated—and give out “incentives” for doing so. The program included 1200 church vaccination sites and distributed 650,000 doses while issuing public service announcements aimed at reducing “vaccine hesitancy” and “debunking myths.”

Records of both vaccine equity programs have been removed from the CDC’s website.

EQUITY PAYDIRT: DEI SPENDING PERMEATES THROUGHOUT HHS

When it comes to DEI and health equity spending, payroll expenses are a drop in the bucket. Promoting these topics can be lucrative for federal employees looking to expand their agency’s budget, and for private scientists hoping to win grants.

The word “equity,” or variations thereof, appears in the HHS 2025 Budget Request 829 times. Putting a dollar total on all of it is impossible; it can be difficult to find a funding initiative that doesn’t incorporate equity in some manner.

Here’s a sampling of some of the spending:

- **\$608 million for agency-wide General Departmental Management, which lists its top three priorities as: “racial equity, environmental justice, climate change.”**
- **\$5 million for the agency-wide “Office of Climate Change and Health Equity” and “Office of Environmental Justice”**
- **\$98.6 million for the Medicaid Integrity Program, which helps fund an “Equity Dashboard.”**
- **\$5 million for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to “diversify the doula workforce” and \$24.3 million for “Nursing Workforce Diversity.”**

¹ [web.archive.org/web/20231201094107/https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/whatis/healthequityinaction/topics/faith-based-vaccine-initiatives.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/whatis/healthequityinaction/topics/faith-based-vaccine-initiatives.html)

DEI SPENDING AT THE HEALTH RESOURCES & SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Using HRSA as an example, a closer look reveals more routine spending also incorporates equity concerns.

The agency launched its Rural Communities Opioid Response initiative in 2019 to send grants to those fighting the opioid crisis. But since 2021, grant applicants have been required to submit “Disparate Impact Statements” explaining how they will consider “systemic racism” when combating the opioid epidemic.

The next \$145 million HHS is requesting for the opioid program comes with this new caveat: grant recipients are “encouraged” to prioritize “populations that have historically suffered from ... other inequities,” such as LGBTQ+ individuals.

A recent press release¹ boasts that the program will now support “key populations” like “individuals with justice involvement”; i.e. criminals.

MORE EQUITY: In the HHS budget request, every program proposal within the Indian Health Service includes an “Equity Impact Assessment.”

HRSA also received almost \$102 million² this year for “Training for Diversity.” It includes \$28.4 million for Centers of Excellence³ that “goes towards recruitment, training, and retaining underrepresented minority students and faculty at health professions schools” and is used to “enhance the academic performance” of minorities.

DEI SPENDING AT THE NIH

“In medical research, lives depend on putting excellence first. The NIH distorts that value, subordinating it to political ideology and endangering those it’s supposed to serve.”

– National Association of Scholars fellow John Sailer, Wall Street Journal.

The NIH Common Fund plans to spend **\$241 million over nine years on its Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation (FIRST)**. Similar to HRSA’s “Training for Diversity” program, FIRST awards grants to top universities to hire scientists from minority backgrounds.

¹ hhs.gov/about/news/2024/03/06/biden-harris-administration-announces-launch-nearly-50-million-initiative-support-opioid-treatment-recovery-services-rural-communities.html

² docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20240318/Division%20D%20LHHS.pdf

³ bhwhrsa.gov/programs/centers-excellence-program-coe

FIRST grants are awarded to institutions considering a scientist’s “commitment to diversity” as equally important to their academic ability. Candidates are penalized for wanting to treat everyone the same regardless of their background, according to documents obtained by the Wall Street Journal¹.

THE PROGRAM STRATEGY is outlined in detail here.²:

dpcpsi.nih.gov/sites/default/files/CoC_Jan_2020_1115_FacultyDiversity.pdf

In January 2024, NIH announced³ its third round of awardee institutions that have promised to “build self-reinforcing communities of scientists committed to diversity and inclusive excellence” and “aim to foster sustainable institutional culture change and positively impact faculty development, retention, progression, and eventual promotion.”

Winners included the **U. of Texas at El Paso** (seeking to hire a cohort focused on Hispanic health disparities) and **Vanderbilt University Medical Center** (seeking to diversify its research faculty in subjects like immunology, neuroscience, and “genomics and health disparity”).

The focus on commitment to diversity on par with scientific rigor has sparked controversy from critics like National Association of Scholars fellow John Sailer.

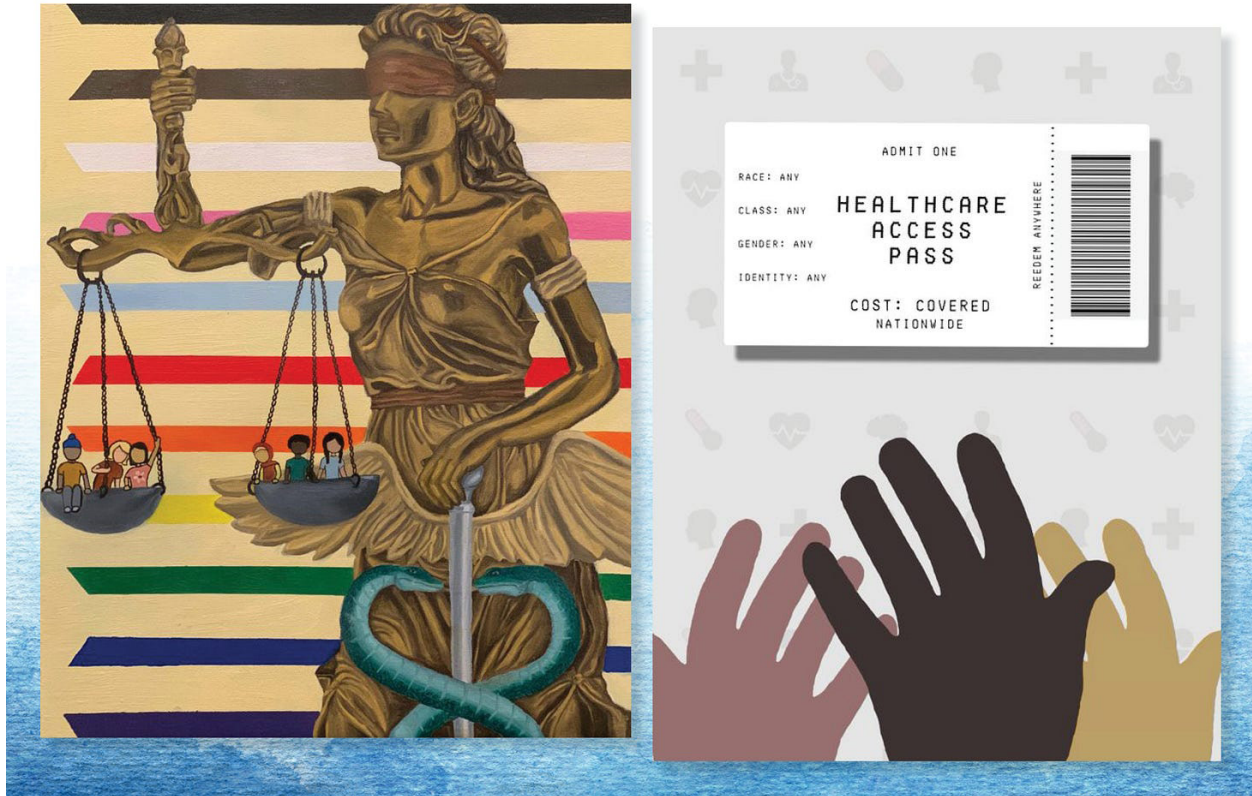
Even flagship NIH programs—“All of Us” and “Brain Research Through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies”—have committed to an “emphasis on diversity and inclusion in the research community” while requesting **\$1.2 billion from Congress for 2025**.



1 [wsj.com/articles/the-nih-sacrifices-scientific-rigor-for-dei-f828a6c7?st=s5ors9oz6hushg3&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink&utm_source=NAS+Email+General&utm_campaign=c7f13eebc1-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_weekly_news_03_19_24&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-4176f19131-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D](https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-nih-sacrifices-scientific-rigor-for-dei-f828a6c7?st=s5ors9oz6hushg3&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink&utm_source=NAS+Email+General&utm_campaign=c7f13eebc1-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_weekly_news_03_19_24&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-4176f19131-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D)

2 dpcpsi.nih.gov/sites/default/files/CoC_Jan_2020_1115_FacultyDiversity.pdf

3 commonfund.nih.gov/FIRST/highlights/third-round-nih-first-cohort-awardees-announced



And over at the NIH’s specialized subagency for minority health, Congress was feeling extra generous.

The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) was allocated **\$534.4 million this year,¹ \$10 million more than they actually requested.**

The NIMHD funds programs² like “Brother, You’re on My Mind: Changing the National Dialogue Regarding Mental Health Among African American Men³,” and the “Envisioning Health Equity Art Challenge⁴.” The third place finalist in the art challenge submitted a depiction of a “healthcare access pass” that covers the “cost” of healthcare for everyone. The runner up submitted an oil painting in which Lady Justice holds scales filled with people of various identity groups. In her other hand she’s grasping the Caduceus symbol, all against a backdrop of the Pride flag.

FURTHER READING

How DEI Corrupted the NIH, City Journal, Christopher F. Rufo (Oct. 24, 2024)
city-journal.org/article/how-dei-corrupted-the-nih

¹ docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20240318/Division%20D%20LHHS.pdf

² nimhd.nih.gov/programs/

³ nimhd.nih.gov/programs/edu-training/byomm/

⁴ nimhd.nih.gov/programs/edu-training/art-challenge/index.html

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IN 2023 AND 2024...

Quantified the federal bureaucracy and the waste, fraud and abuse that followed Covid lockdowns. We also exposed the radical DEI ideology that had permeated the Department of Defense, National Science Foundation and the EPA.

IN 2021 AND 2022...

Identified Dr. Anthony Fauci as the top paid federal employee, quantified the staggering cost of U.S. military gear left behind in Afghanistan, cracked open California's state checkbook and Big Pharma's \$1.4 billion in third-party paid royalties—leading to four televised congressional hearings in 2022.

IN 2020...

The President's Budget To Congress FY 2021 included a first-ever chapter, "Stopping Wasteful and Unnecessary Spending," which was inspired by our oversight report, *Where's The Pork? A Study of \$600 Billion In Federal Grants*. Included in the President's Budget was our report, *Use-It-Or-Lose-It - How The Federal Government Spent \$97 Billion In September 2018*.

IN 2019...

Our Top 82 U.S. Non-Profit Hospitals: Quantifying Government Payments & Financial Assets report launched on *FOX News' Tucker Carlson Tonight* and *USA TODAY*. This report backstopped President Trump's two executive orders on healthcare price transparency by showing that wealthy charitable non-profit healthcare providers and their CEO's were making big profits. Colorado Governor Jared Polis (D) also cited this data in his state of the state address while arguing for price reforms.

IN 2018...

Open The Books' Mapping The Swamp, A Study Of The Administrative State Media report launched on *FOX News' The Ingraham Angle* and directly led to Representative Judy Hice's (R-GA) legislation on pension and bonus transparency (H.R. 2612). Furthermore, we briefed the Executive Office of the President, Office of Management & Budget regarding our policy ideas to drain the swamp.

IN 2017...

The Tax Cuts And Jobs Act 2017, passed into law and included a claw-back tax on Ivy League-style, excessive university endowments. The *Boston Globe* cited our Ivy League, Inc. oversight report as a catalyst for the legislative provision. Coverage included *The Wall Street Journal* and eight segments on *Fox New*

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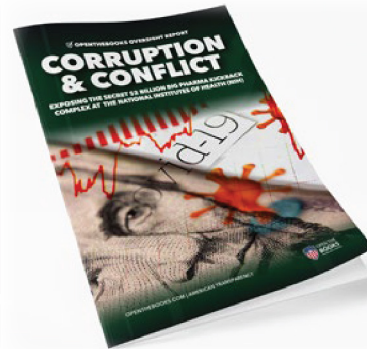


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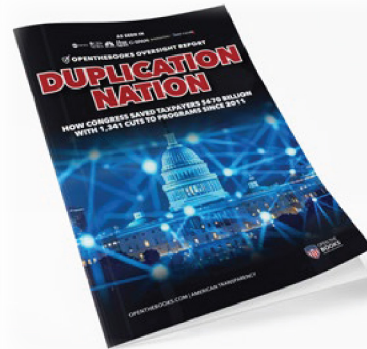
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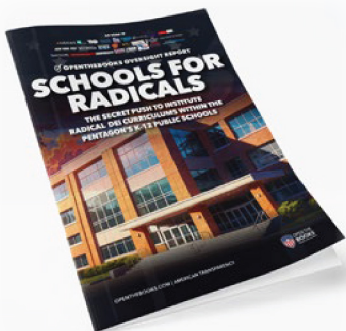
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