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SEIU National Media

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AFL-CIO, SEIU Unions Sue Trump Administration Over Cuts to Key Labor Relations Agency

NEW YORK – The AFL-CIO and unions representing workers across private and public sector industries [sued](#) the Trump administration today over its dismantling of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), including firing mediators and staff, and closing field offices across the country.

FMCS is a small but important independent federal agency that is integral to the government's labor relations infrastructure. Among the critical services FMCS provides, it helps resolve contract negotiations between workers and employers to protect both the economy and workers' rights, generating over \$500 million in national economic savings each year, even by conservative estimates. But DOGE cuts have [decimated](#) the agency: 93% of FMCS staff have been placed on leave, the mediation workforce has been taken down from the 80-100 needed for the agency's work to just five, and all of the field offices have been closed.

The suit argues that the administration's actions are illegal under the Administrative Procedure Act and the U.S. Constitution because they amount to an effective dismantling of FMCS that has prevented it from performing its statutory responsibilities required by Congress.

"FMCS is a little-known but critical government agency that works to bring labor and management together to solve problems between workers and employers—and it's illegally under attack by Elon Musk and his DOGE," said **AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler**. "Without FMCS, there will be longer and drawn-out contract negotiations, as well as delays in implementing increased wages and improved benefits won through collective bargaining. The unnecessary cuts to FMCS make absolutely no economic sense and

will cost taxpayers, consumers, businesses and workers. Congress created FMCS nearly 80 years ago, and only an act of Congress can shutter it. I'm proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with our affiliated unions today in filing this lawsuit to challenge this illegal, cruel and wrong-headed action by DOGE.”

“We are filing this lawsuit because once again, the administration is unlawfully shutting down an agency simply because billionaires do not like it. Hobbling employers’ and workers’ ability to negotiate will only hurt our communities,” said **AFSCME President Lee Saunders**. “FMCS helps to mediate thousands of collective bargaining agreements and other disputes, ensuring workers are paid fairly while commerce and services continue to flow. The agency’s meager \$55 million budget – which accounts for less than 0.0014% of the overall federal budget – generates more than \$500 million in annual savings for our economy. Shutting it down helps only billionaires like Elon Musk and his anti-union friends, who want to take away workers’ voice on the job.”

“This case is about more than a single agency – it’s about upholding workers’ fundamental bargaining rights and protecting a foundation stone of labor relations in America,” said **AFT President Randi Weingarten**. “FMCS was created by Congress as a neutral arbiter to promote labor peace and fair negotiations, a role it has proudly carried out for nearly 80 years. The president says he cares about working people, but that’s hard to believe when he attempts to abolish an agency that helps them negotiate fair contracts with their employers. FMCS was crucial to securing an agreement during the Oregon Nurses’ Association’s strike in February, and FMCS mediators were in the room for first contracts at charter schools across New Orleans, New York, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh—discussions that suddenly stalled in the face of the administration’s attacks. The AFT and our co-plaintiffs are suing to block the destruction of FMCS so it can continue to fulfil its Congressional mandate and ensure the administration follows, rather than ignores, federal law.”

“The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service is a small but mighty agency that directly benefits the U.S. economy by helping to resolve costly and disruptive labor disputes in the public and private sectors. Trump and Elon Musk’s efforts to abolish FMCS have nothing to do with saving taxpayers money and everything to do with gutting workers’ union rights and protections. It’s shameful, it’s wasteful, and it must be stopped,” said

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) National President Everett Kelley.

“The Trump administration has no legal right to eliminate FMCS through executive action, and no rational reason to eliminate an agency that helps working people,” said **United Federation of Teachers President Michael Mulgrew.**

“The Trump administration’s reckless attempt to eliminate FMCS is yet another attack on working people and our rights to collectively bargain,” said **IAM Union International President Brian Bryant.** “FMCS is a small, but vitally important agency that serves as a much-needed independent arbiter during negotiations between workers and employers. For the IAM Union, FMCS has been vital in resolving contract disputes with national and international economic consequences, including a strike of 4,300 U.S. Navy shipbuilders at Bath Iron Works, and helping to avoid work stoppages on numerous occasions. We are proud to stand with our partners in the labor movement to fight back against this illegal attack on the rights of all working families.”

“We will not let this administration’s union-busting tactics take away our rights, and we will not take orders from an unelected billionaire. America’s public service workers serve our nation without regard to profits, politics, or glory. That’s why SEIU members are standing with our siblings at AFL-CIO, AFGE, AFSCME, AFT, IAM, UFCW and other unions to fight back against the President’s unlawful dismantling of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service,” **said SEIU President April Verrett.** “This isn’t just about protecting federal workers and their unions. It’s about protecting our communities. When you take away the voices of workers serving veterans, securing the border, and protecting public health, you silence the voices of all those who rely on their services, too.”

The legal challenge was brought by AFL-CIO, American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), International Associations of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), unions, as well as many locals and affiliates, which have worked with FMCS mediators in labor disputes with their members’ employers. Many are actively engaged in collective-bargaining negotiations with FMCS when the mediator was forced to abruptly leave or cancel the negotiations because they had been

placed on leave. With only five mediators remaining at FMCS, these unions and their workers will be left in the lurch, working under expired contracts or no contracts, and strikes or lockouts are much more likely.

The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. The complaint can be found online [here](#).

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