# Federal judge halts freeze on grants as Trump rolls out new policies



A federal judge has issued a temporary halt to a freeze on federal grants and loans, a significant decision that affects potential funding totalling trillions of dollars. The ruling by U.S. District Judge Loren L. AliKhan came on Tuesday afternoon, just moments before the freeze was due to be enforced. This administrative stay halts the freeze until the following Monday. The White House had intended to initiate this pause as part of a sweeping ideological review of federal expenditure, causing distress among various organisations dependent on federal funding. Officials from the administration clarified that direct federal assistance to individuals, which includes Social Security, Medicare, food stamps, as well as student loans and scholarships, would remain unaffected by the freeze.

In a separate yet related policy move, President Donald Trump signed an executive order designed to terminate federal support for gender transitions for individuals under the age of 19. This represents part of Trump's ongoing efforts to overturn policies established by the Biden administration that aimed to safeguard the rights and healthcare of transgender individuals. The order coincided with directives issued to the Pentagon to review military policies, indicating a potential move to restrict transgender individuals from serving in the armed forces. Furthermore, Trump's administration sought to redefine sex strictly as male or female, drawing immediate legal challenges that are expected to escalate.

As the federal grants freeze commenced, various early childhood education facilities and necessary state programs experienced operational difficulties. Programs like Medicaid and Head Start faced significant access issues, revealing how intrinsic federal funding is to services for low-income families. Although the Trump administration maintained that these particular programs were not impacted by the freeze, describing a technical glitch related to Medicaid, the outbreak of confusion underscored the reliance of essential services on federal support, despite the judge's subsequent intervention.

Amid these developments, six active duty service members have launched the first legal challenge against Trump’s revised policies regarding transgender troops. This lawsuit was filed in a federal court in Washington, involving both current active members and former personnel seeking re-enlistment. This latest effort, led by the same legal team that opposed a previous ban during Trump’s initial term, contests the executive order on equal protection grounds, alleging that it exhibits bias against a specific demographic.

On a different front, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem announced during a press conference in New York City that federal agents had executed a series of arrests, including one individual captured on viral video entering a Colorado apartment associated with gang members. This operation aligns with Trump’s broader immigration enforcement strategy under scrutiny in various urban centres.

Internationally, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed that President Trump has extended an invitation for him to visit the White House on February 4. This visit marks Netanyahu as the first foreign leader to engage with Trump’s administration during its second term. The invitation comes at a critical time, coinciding with ongoing discussions regarding a ceasefire in the protracted conflict between Israel and Hamas.

Gaza remains beset by the aftermath of a lengthy conflict, with over 375,000 Palestinians reportedly returning to their homes after 15 months of displacement. In recounting their experience, the Abu Jarad family, upon arriving back in Beit Lahiya, found their home and surrounding landscape devastated but still standing, having endured numerous hardships during their displacement.

In environmental news, a recent study has concluded that climate change has significantly exacerbated the conditions that contributed to the recent wildfires in Southern California. The research points to a 35% increase in the frequency of high-fire weather events attributable to global warming, underscoring the compounded risks associated with prolonged periods of drought and other climatic factors.

Meanwhile, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo reflects escalating conflict, as government forces engage with M23 rebels reportedly advancing into Goma, the country's largest city. Reports indicate substantial violence levels, with hospitals overwhelmed and civilian casualties prevalent, prompting international alerts advising non-essential American citizens to depart the region.

Lastly, advancements within the tech sector are highlighted through the development of a new AI chatbot by Chinese startup DeepSeek, designed as a competitor to advanced systems such as OpenAI's ChatGPT. Initial responses to the chatbot reveal operational limitations reflective of censorship on sensitive subjects, echoing a broader narrative about international competition in AI technology and governance.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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