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Project 2025: Democratic Doomsday

BY LINDSEY ANSTEAD ON NOVEMBER 17, 2023

Forget Trump. Project 2025 is the greatest threat to democracy we have seen in our country's history. The 1000-page plan, written by Trump-era Republican groups, demonstrates once again the devastating effects partisan polarization can have on our country's political stability.

With the upcoming presidential election only a year away, voters aren't the only groups mobilizing. In preparation for the upcoming presidential election, conservative think tanks are gearing up for a right-wing takeover of the country's policy, personnel, and training. This is the goal of the [2025 Presidential Transition Project](#), a 1,000-page declassified guide to overthrowing the federal government. Orchestrated by a diverse host of [conservative organizations](#), Project 2025 aims to virtually delete all bureaucratic safety stops, paving the way for an effective, radical Republican administration.

The quiet coup of [Project 2025](#) presents a dangerous threat to our democracy and proposes an ideological insurrection. With recent polling showing Donald Trump either tied or [several points](#) ahead of President Biden, this daunting debrief is becoming more rooted in reality.

“Flood the Zone with Conservatives”

This 1000-page synopsis focuses on how the next Republican administration should spend their first 180 days in office on uprooting bureaucracy that they consider to be favoring the liberal political agenda. The director of the project, Paul Dans described the project by its pressing goal of [“flooding the zone with conservatives.”](#)

If successful, Project 2025 would facilitate the firing of approximately [50,000](#) federal workers. This mass exodus of a major workforce is merely a means to an end for the right-leaning Heritage Foundation and the other conservative corporations co-authoring the Project. They see the firing of career government officials as the most direct route to creating a federal bureaucracy filled with political loyalists.

Why Civil Servants?

Career professionals or “[civil servants](#)” are the bedrock of our democratic government. They are the body of government officials who are employed in civil occupations that are neither political nor judicial. Many civil servants transition from administration to administration, a kind of [inherited profession](#) that cannot be fired based on their leanings or political beliefs. Therefore, their political leanings and beliefs cannot be grounds for their release from service. In a [Washington Post](#) article surrounding this plot, Jason Miller, the deputy director for management at the Office of Management and Budget describes their importance, “the reason we put a nonpartisan civil service in place 140 years ago was so that the American people could trust that their government worked for them, irrespective of which party was in power.” His appeals adhere to the idea that civil servants should be able to be trusted by all members of society and should never be divided by partisanship. The polarization of this bedrock could derail society’s entire relationship to the federal workforce.

Project 2025 aims to do just that. Since the creation of the professional civil service, conservatives have leveraged the existence of civil servants as cop-outs. Often the victim of anti-statist rhetoric, civil servants are demeaned as “[unelected](#)” or biased toward a certain political party. This serves as a way for conservatives to undermine the legitimacy of government actions and qualifications. “Discrediting public faith in the competence and honesty of federal employees is a powerful tool of conservatives,” says [Landon Storrs, Ph.D.](#), a historian at the University of Iowa and author of “The Second Red Scare and the Unmaking of the New Deal Left.” Project 2025 is merely the most recent vehicle conservatives have used to accomplish their anti-statist doctrine. In that sense, the goals of Project 2025 are not new. What is new is the enhanced level of Republican resolve and recruitment.

Project 2025 seeks to reinvent the federal workforce to be a loyal extension of the executive branch. Republicans are seeking to replace the core of our federal bureaucracy with like-minded, radical right-wing individuals eager to approve a presidential request at any moment’s notice. To accomplish this goal, Project 2025’s authoring groups recommend that the President reinstate what’s called [Schedule F](#)—a Trump-era executive order that would reclassify tens of thousands of the 2 million federal employees as essentially at-will workers who could more easily be fired. It would delete virtually all safety stops for an effective, accountable Republican administration and destroy years of experience in the federal workforce.

The strategy employed by Project 2025 aims to recruit radical Republicans from across America to serve in the federal government. Their rhetoric? To shrink the government, we must join it.

This conscription tactic combusts traditional Republican logic of government restraint in itself and rebels against traditional Republican doctrine. Project 2025 seeks to replace our democratic bedrocks with a black hole of partisan fanatics. If Project 2025 is successful, expertise-driven civil service government would become a thing of the past.

Policy & Polarization

In terms of policy, the Heritage Foundation recommends reshaping federal agencies, reducing their independence, and the allocation of more power to the [president](#). Their policy recommendations reinvent modern conservative priorities, favoring a strategy that aims to shrink the government by expanding the executive. It autocratically concentrates presidential powers while dismantling traditional checks and balances.

To name a few, Project 2025's conservative policy wish list includes a "top-to-bottom overhaul" of the Department of Justice, particularly curbing its efforts to combat the spread of misinformation. It includes a frontal attack on [environmental policy](#) including the repeal of the Inflation Reduction Act, rolling back Biden's climate corps, and jamming America's pending transition to clean energy. It calls for stepped-up [prosecution](#) of anyone providing or distributing abortion pills by mail. In addition, radical proposals include the "abolishment" of recent diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, the "woke" agenda, and the reinstatement of service members who were discharged for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine. All are planned to occur within the first 180 days of a 2025 Republican presidency.

Political Implications

Who would listen to this? The previous Trump administration relied heavily on Heritage's "Mandate" for policy guidance, embracing nearly [two-thirds](#) of Heritage's proposals within just one year in office. Even if Donald Trump does not demolish the Republican primary, his opponents Vivek Ramaswamy and Ron DeSantis have already come out supporting the roots of Project 2025, some suggesting even more radical changes than the proposed cuts. For example, Republican Vivek Ramaswamy says he wants to cut a [million civilian employees](#) from the federal government—more than a third of the non-military federal workforce. As such, it is likely that the Republican nominee for President will fall in stride with the recommendations of the Heritage Foundation.

Democratic Derail

Since the release of Project 2025, Democratic leaders have begun brainstorming ways to thwart this massive turnover. In response to Project 2025, President Biden's administration has begun bolstering protection for civil service workers, hoping to protect them against turnover. President Biden's [response](#) includes the strengthening of existing job protections and the right to due process that is a hallmark of federal employment. Through this new rule proposed by Biden, federal employees can appeal a firing or reassignment—even if their positions were [reclassified](#). Biden's new rule effectively redesignates the categories of jobs targeted by the Trump order as career appointees meaning they cannot be considered [“at will.”](#)

Despite Biden's efforts to preempt the effects of Project 2025, our civil servants are still vulnerable. Even the current administration recognizes that these protections and rules can be repealed and reinvented by a Republican administration, meaning that they are only a [temporary fix](#) to a terrifying problem. The only way to defeat the rising reality of Project 2025 once and for all, is to win the Presidential election.

The development of Project 2025's dystopian daydreams is directly linked to the presidential election. For President Biden, this means advertising and acknowledging the Heritage Foundation's impact and their relative extremism. To defeat the Doomsday reality of Project 2025, President Joe Biden and his team must focus on highlighting the opposite realities that would exist in a Republican presidency. To do this, President Biden's campaign must reveal the real decision-makers that will shape a Republican president's 180 days in office, highlight the role of the Heritage Foundation, and raise awareness of the 1000-page plan that stands to destroy neutrality in our federal infrastructure.

If this happens, Project 2025 could be President Biden's greatest campaign weapon. The policy proposals and radical rhetoric contained in the report alone hold the potential to systematically motivate Democratic voters. The best way to avoid this democratic doomsday scenario is to acknowledge it exists.

Featured Image Source: [The Associated Press](#)