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Federal Government Update - 10.23.26 [1]

October 23, 2026 by Riley Black [2]

Dear Colleagues,

Please find a federal government update from our teams.

White House Issues Women's Health Executive Order
The White House issued an executive order on Oct. 19 called *Advancing Women's Health to Improve Outcomes in All Phases of Life* [3]. The order establishes the White House Women's Health Task Force to coordinate federal efforts to improve women's health outcomes. Co-chaired by the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the White House Chief of Staff, the task force will focus on advancing women's health research, accelerating the translation of scientific discoveries into clinical care and improving prevention, diagnosis and treatment. The order also directs HHS to establish a new Women's Health Division within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to strengthen research coordination and address gaps in scientific understanding of women's health conditions. Here's a fact sheet [4] with more information.

DOJ Drops Appeals to Overhaul PSLF
The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) dropped two appeals on Oct. 21 which sought to overturn June 2026 U.S. district court rulings vacating changes advanced [5] by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to overhaul the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program, reports [6] the AP. The PSLF program forgives federal student loans after 10 years of qualifying payments and work in public service. ED sought to amend the definition of a "qualifying employer" to prevent employees from receiving loan forgiveness if their employer engages in "certain illegal conduct" or has a "substantial illegal purpose" as determined "by a preponderance of the evidence" by the Secretary of Education.

Court Denies Preliminary Injunction to Halt DEI Discrimination Executive Order
A U.S. district court denied a preliminary injunction on Oct. 14 to halt the implementation of an executive order entitled *Addressing DEI Discrimination by Federal Contractors* [7] issued in March 2026. The order directs federal agencies to ensure all federal contractors and subcontractors do not engage in "racially discriminatory DEI activities" or face significant penalties. The court's ruling allows the federal government to continue enforcing the policy in contracts as the case proceeds.

NSF Acting Director Announces Departure
Brian Stone, acting director of the National Science Foundation (NSF), announced in an Oct. 20 staff memorandum [8] that he will retire from the agency on Dec. 31, reports [9] the *American Institute of Physics.* NSF has been without a Senate-confirmed director since April 2025. Jim O'Neill, the White House's nominee for the post, has not yet received a Senate confirmation hearing.

The Federal Relations and General Counsel teams are actively monitoring developments at the federal level. We are working closely with the President and Chancellors, as well as the Colorado congressional delegation to champion CU priorities. We are committed to keeping you informed. Please visit the CU System Federal Updates and Actions page [10] for up-to-date communications and federal memos.

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