

Administration proposes combining DOL with Education Department

The Department of Labor and the Department of Education would merge into one agency under a Trump administration proposal released June 21. The plan was announced as part of an effort to streamline Washington bureaucracy.

The resulting agency would be called the Department of Education and the Workforce, or DEW.

A policy document called “Delivering Government Solutions in the 21st Century” said “merging ED and DOL would allow the Federal Government to address the educational and skill needs of American students and workers in a coordinated way, eliminating duplication of effort between the two agencies and maximizing the effectiveness of skill-building efforts.”

The administration proposed four main sub-agencies focused on:

- K-12 education
- Higher education and workforce development
- Research/evaluation/administration
- Enforcement.

Most of the DOL’s current HR-related functions would fall to the enforcement sub-agency, including the work of the Employee Benefits Security Administration, the Wage and Hour Division, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs and OSHA.

Congress would have to approve the scheme to merge the two Cabinet departments. Early reaction to the proposal on Capitol Hill was less than enthusiastic.

If Congress refuses to OK such a dramatic change, the administration might be content to shift just a few workforce development programs such as the Job Corps to the Education Department.