



Texas federal judge blocks Biden's vaccine mandate for federal employees

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Another blow to the Biden administration's efforts to increase the country's vaccination rate came Friday.

A federal judge in Texas blocked the White House's mandate for federal employees. That requirement impacted some 3.5 million U.S workers.

The Texas judge called the mandate an overstep of presidential authority and even cited last week's Supreme Court decision to strike down a separate mandate for private sector workers.

The Justice Department has already vowed to appeal.

"This is definitely starting to become a pattern of the Biden administration, losing on the similar lines of reasoning and multiple cases now," said Thomas Berry, a constitutional law expert with the Cato Institute.

Berry says Friday's decision would likely not have happened if it weren't for the Supreme Court's action last week.

U.S. District Judge Jeffrey Brown said, "The president certainly possesses 'broad statutory authority' to regulate executive branch employment policies but the Supreme Court has expressly held that a COVID-19 vaccine mandate is not an employment regulation and that means the president was without statutory authority to issue the federal worker mandate."

Brown, appointed by then-President Donald Trump, said the government can protect public health through less invasive measures like masking and social distancing.

On Friday, the White House reported that 98% of federal employees are vaccinated or seeking a medical or religious exemption.

"Still, even if 1% of the federal workforce is unvaccinated, given the size of the federal workforce, that's not an insignificant number," Berry said. "The opinion does suggest that people in that 1% may be close to being fired or disciplined in some manner."

The group behind this legal fight is Feds For Medical Freedom.

The organization's president, Marcus Thornton, says the decision by the Texas judge is a win for federal employees.

In a statement, Thornton said, "Today's decision by Judge Brown is a victory for the thousands of men and women who want to serve their government without sacrificing their individual rights. The 6,000+ members of Feds for Medical Freedom want nothing more than to continue their service to this country without being subjected to unconstitutional mandates. For the time being, the court's ruling grants them that wish, but the fight is far from over. We will continue to pursue every lawful avenue available to ensure our members' rights are respected and their service is honored appropriately."

White House officials say that they are confident in its legal authority.