

Merge the federal Labor and Education departments

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Last month, the Trump administration proposed merging the federal Departments of Education and Labor in a bid to streamline the federal government and the operations of the respective departments

It's a proposal that rightly acknowledges the need to eliminate duplicative functions and have government run more efficiently.

It also compels a reexamination of the Department of Education, its mission and its effectiveness.

Established in 1979, the Department of Education has evidently failed in its mission to “promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness.”

Growth in the department's budget over the past four decades hasn't translated to improved standardized test scores, which have remained flat. Nor has it made college more affordable, as millions of Americans with a combined student loan indebtedness of over \$1 trillion can attest.

As Neal McCluskey from the Cato Institute has noted, mounting evidence suggests federal aid has actually contributed to tuition inflation. While this certainly helps colleges pay for newer and grander accommodations and lawns, it's hard to see the practical benefits to students.

None of this is in any way surprising. The notion of sending money through a Washington, D.C.-based bureaucracy for distribution to the states with at-times onerous and expensive strings attached is clearly a poor way of allocating funding for education.

Short of abolishing the department, and leaving its functions to the states, the next best thing is some form of downsizing.

The proposal to merge the Departments of Education and Labor would not only clear some redundancies and administrative bloat; it might even leverage the remnants of the Department of Education into something more productive than it is now.

“This would help create alignment throughout the education-to-career pipeline, while also creating coherence within the workforce development and higher education worlds,” the administration argues.

Ensuring American workers have the skills necessary to compete in the 21st-century economy is a laudable goal. It's an improvement over the questionable status quo at the Department of Education.