

Temporary Restraining Order Places Hold on Federal Award Freeze

Dear UH Research Community,

While the current federal funding environment remains in a state of flux since the issuance of the January 27th OMB Memorandum M-25-13, *Temporary Pause of Agency Grant, Loan, and Other Financial Assistance Programs*, there has been a new development to update you on.

The University of Hawai`i is in the process of confirming with our federal funding agencies their positions with respect to the effect of the Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) issued by the US District Court of Rhode Island Judge on January 31, 2025 ([click on link to read the TRO](#)). The State of Hawai`i is a Plaintiff in this case. We believe the intent of the Judge was for the federal agencies to (temporarily) cease "freezing" or not paying out on grant awards pending their review for compliance with the Executive Orders issued by the White House. The exact wording of the TRO (in relevant part) is as follows:

- During the pendency of the Temporary Restraining Order, Defendants shall not pause, freeze, impede, block, cancel, or terminate Defendants' compliance with awards and obligations to provide federal financial assistance to the States, and Defendants shall not impede the States' access to such awards and obligations, except on the basis of the applicable authorizing statutes, regulations, and terms.
- If Defendants engage in the "identif[ication] and review" of federal financial assistance programs, as identified in the OMB Directive, such exercise shall not affect a pause, freeze, impediment, block, cancellation, or termination of Defendants' compliance with such awards and obligations, except on the basis of the applicable authorizing statutes, regulations, and terms.
- Defendants shall also be restrained and prohibited from reissuing, adopting, implementing, or otherwise giving effect to the OMB Directive under any other name or title or through any other Defendants (or agency supervised, administered, or controlled by any Defendant), such as the continued implementation identified by the White House Press Secretary's statement of January 29, 2025.

For awards in which UH has received a Stop Work Order, work cannot continue and expenditures cannot be incurred on the project(s) until such time as the sponsoring agency formally lifts the order.

While this action is temporary, it signifies a growing national effort to gain clarity and understanding on federal funding that plays a significant role in important university projects around the country. We are continuously monitoring developments as they occur and will continue to provide you with up-to-date information and guidance as it becomes available. See link: <https://research.hawaii.edu/new-administration-federal-funding-updates/>.

Thank you for your continued support, understanding, and patience.

Sincerely,

Vassilis L. Syrmos

Vice President for Research and Innovation