



BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

MARCH 14, 2025

TO: Members of the Board of Education
FROM: Interim Superintendent, Mao Misty Her

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Board Communications Approved by: Interim Superintendent Mao Misty Her



Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Mao Misty Her, Interim Superintendent

Date: March 14, 2025
Phone Number: 457-3884

Regarding: Interim Superintendent Calendar Highlights

The purpose of this communication is to inform the Board of notable calendar items:

- Spoke at the Information Technology Department's buyback day event
- Site visits at Figarden, Gibson, Lawless and Tatarian
- Attended the Labor Management Partnership Meeting
- Attended the CART Annual Joint Board Meeting
- Attended the California State University Fresno (CSUF) President's Advisory board on African American Student Success
- Attended the CSUF Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) Leadership Council Meeting
- Held the ACSA Quarterly Meeting
- Participated in the Equity Centered Pipeline Initiative Superintendent's Quarterly Meeting
- Held meeting with Fresno Police Department and Fresno Unified to discuss First Responders Pathway

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Misty Her at 457-3884

Cabinet Approval: 

Name and Title: Mao Misty Her, Interim Superintendent

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Kim Kelstrom, Chief Executive

Date: March 14, 2025

Phone Number: 457-3907

Regarding: School Services Weekly Update Reports for March 7, 2025

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board a copy of School Services of California's (SSC) Weekly Updates. Each week SSC provides an update and commentary on different educational fiscal issues. In addition, they include different articles related to education issues. The SSC Weekly Updates for March 7, 2025 are attached and include the following articles:

- Government Shutdown Looming – March 6, 2025
- Draft of Trump Order Tells Linda McMahon to Prepare for Ed. Dept.'s Dismantling – March 6, 2025
- California Educators Nervous About Federal Plan to Investigate Schools with Diversity Initiatives – March 7, 2025

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Kim Kelstrom at 457-3907.

Cabinet Approval:



Name and Title: Patrick Jensen, Chief Financial Officer



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DATE: March 7, 2025
TO: Misty Her
Interim Superintendent
AT: Fresno Unified School District
FROM: Your SSC Governmental Relations Team
RE: ***SSC's Sacramento Weekly Update***

Linda McMahon Sworn In as Education Secretary

On Monday, March 3, 2025, the U.S. Senate confirmed Linda McMahon as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) in a 51-45 vote. She was then sworn in by Jacqueline Clay, the ED's Chief Human Capital Officer.

In her first act as ED Secretary, McMahon instructed the ED staff to prepare for its "final mission," which indicates that she will work to fulfill President Donald Trump's goal of eliminating the department.

While closing the ED is a long shot, a draft of the Executive Order (EO) that will outline Trump's plans to shutter the department's doors was leaked this week by the Wall Street Journal and other publications. In the draft EO, Trump directs ED Secretary McMahon to "take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure of the Education Department" based on "the maximum extent appropriate and permitted by law."

While the draft EO does not mention Congress, it is important to note that it would take an act of the legislative branch to abolish the department, which is unlikely to happen despite Republicans controlling both chambers. Any act to eliminate the ED would require a filibuster proof, 60-vote majority in the Senate, which means the Trump Administration would need all 53 Republicans as well as seven Democratic Senators to bring the act to the floor for a vote. There is also no guarantee that all Republican lawmakers would vote to eliminate the department as several bills to do so in the past had some GOP opposition.

It is unknown when President Trump plans on issuing the EO to shutter the department, but it is clear that it will be an uphill battle due to the need for congressional action.

LAO Releases Analysis on School Nutrition Proposals

The Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO), the Legislature’s nonpartisan policy and fiscal advisor, released a [brief](#) this week on school nutrition in the 2025-26 State Budget. We highlight the three key recommendations from the brief below.

1. Governor Gavin Newsom is proposing to provide an additional \$84 million in 2025-26 for the Universal Meals Program. However, the LAO estimates that the state will serve 967 million meals next fiscal year, which is 46 million (or 5.0%) higher than the Newsom Administration’s estimates. Based on the LAO’s higher estimates, it recommends providing an additional \$116 million (\$32 million more than Governor Newsom’s proposal) for 2025-26 to ensure that local educational agencies (LEAs) can be reimbursed for universal school meals.
2. Governor Newsom is also proposing \$150 million one-time for a third round of Kitchen Infrastructure and Training (KIT) funds. These KIT funds are used for LEAs to increase capacity for offering freshly prepared meals on-site. The LAO recommends rejecting this proposal since the effect of the previous KIT funding is still unclear. The brief says that the Legislature could evaluate if additional funding is warranted in 2026-27, when more information on the uses of the first two rounds is available.
3. The LAO also recommends better ongoing data collection aligned with statewide nutrition priorities. The brief states that if the Legislature continues to provide funds for specific nutrition initiatives, the LAO recommends that the state set goals associated with the funds and collect statewide data to assess progress of these goals. The additional data would help the Legislature determine whether to continue to dedicate resources to a specific priority or direct funding toward other priorities.

Leilani Aguinaldo

Government Shutdown Looming

By Kyle Hyland
School Services of California Inc.'s *Fiscal Report*
March 6, 2025

The federal government is currently operating on a continuing resolution (CR), which is set to expire next Friday, March 14, 2025.

A CR is a stopgap measure that temporarily keeps the government funded at prior fiscal year (FY) levels while Congress negotiates a full funding package for the current fiscal year. This means that, while FY 2025 technically began on October 1, 2024, the federal government has utilized several stopgap measures with FY 2024 spending levels to avoid a government shutdown.

Over the past week, President Donald Trump, House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA), and Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) have endorsed a proposal to fund the rest of the fiscal year using a CR. Under this plan, the FY 2024 spending levels would remain in effect through FY 2025. This would allow the Trump Administration, and the GOP-led Congress to close the chapter on the current fiscal year and look ahead to FY 2026, which will begin on October 1, 2025.

However, due to a razor thin majority in the House and the threat of a filibuster in the Senate, Republican leaders will have to thread a political needle for this plan to work. Under the current House makeup, Republicans can only afford to lose one vote before needing to reach across the aisle for Democratic support. In the Senate, in order to invoke cloture (break a filibuster) on this proposal, the GOP would need at least seven Democrats to cross party lines and allow the proposal to be brought to the floor for a vote.

This means that even if Speaker Johnson can garner enough votes to approve a full-year CR in the House, the GOP still requires at least seven Democratic votes in the Senate to end debate and vote on the measure. This gives Senate Democrats leverage in negotiations since a measure cannot move forward without at least some Democratic support.

It is important to note that, while Democratic leaders have expressed willingness to support another clean, short-term CR to avert a government shutdown, they have yet to endorse a CR that extends to the end of the fiscal year.

While we do not know what will transpire in Congress next week, we do know that without a temporary or full-year stopgap measure, a government shutdown will commence beginning on March 15, 2025.

Note: A bill has been filed in the Senate to move the ED's responsibilities to other departments, and another bill is pending in the House that proposes simply, in one sentence, to terminate the department on December 31, 2026.

Draft of Trump Order Tells Linda McMahon to Prepare for Ed. Dept.'s Dismantling

*It follows up on a Trump campaign pledge, but only Congress can actually eliminate the federal agency.
One expert called it a "nothing burger."*

By Brooke Schultz
Education Week
March 6, 2025

Education watchers are bracing for a long-contemplated executive order that would direct Education Secretary Linda McMahon to prepare for the Education Department's dissolution.

The order will direct McMahon to "take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure of the Department of Education," according to draft text obtained by Education Week. The Wall Street Journal first reported on the draft.

Though the order would be a bold step toward abolishing the department, the actual elimination of the agency would still require approval from Congress—a high bar to reach, despite Republican majorities in both chambers.

The order follows up on a campaign pledge Trump made repeatedly last year to eliminate the 45-year-old agency. Trump has already moved aggressively in the first weeks of his second term to downsize it, and shortly after her swearing-in on Monday, McMahon laid out what she called the department's "final mission" in a note to agency employees.

It's unclear when Trump plans to sign the order, or what a final version would ultimately look like. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said on X that the president didn't plan to sign an executive order on the department on Thursday. An Education Department spokesperson didn't respond to a request for comment.

"We've seen this administration take a lot of actions—to release executive orders, release guidance documents, say stuff off the cuff, and then they pull back really soon after," said Jon Valant, a senior fellow in governance studies at the Brookings Institution and the director of the Brown Center on Education Policy. "I think we also need to realize that whatever is in the EO, that doesn't mean that that's the end of the story."

Another policy expert, who worked in the U.S. Department of Education under President George W. Bush, called the executive order "a nothing burger."

"I think it's really just theater," said Mike Petrilli, president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, an education policy think tank. "This is something that the president promised to do on the campaign trail, and so he's got to check the box, and this executive order will show that he's doing what he can. But I don't think it's going to have much of an impact."

The draft order also directs McMahon to make sure fund allocations from the agency comply with the administration's flurry of recent directives pertaining to "illegal race- and sex-based discrimination, including illegal discrimination obscured under the label 'diversity, equity, and inclusion' or similar terms."

The order has been anticipated since media reports about it last month. Education advocates have decried the possibility of eliminating the agency, with the nation's two largest teachers' unions saying it would harm vulnerable students and vowing to take action should it be signed.

The agency's dismantling was a plank in the Republican Party's 2024 platform, and it's been a perennial position from some Republicans, who have wanted to do away with it ever since it was carved into its own department under Democratic President Jimmy Carter in 1980.

"I've begun thinking about these executive orders less as legal directives and more as a particularly potent version of the president's traditional tool of the bully pulpit signaling the president's priorities to their allies and to Congress and to the public and to their co-partisans and state government and local government about what the priorities of this administration are, and what are the marching orders for other folks on the same team," said David Houston, an assistant professor of education at George Mason University.

Trump and other Republicans have repeatedly argued that the federal government's already limited influence on education should be diminished, but those calls have come as Trump's administration has sought to exert federal muscle over schools through a series of other executive actions that target diversity, equity, and inclusion and transgender athletes.

"The experiment of controlling American education through Federal programs and dollars—and the unaccountable bureaucrats those programs and dollars support—has failed our children, our teachers, and our families," the draft order reads.

Houston has analyzed the effects of presidential endorsements on different education policies and public opinion. Presidents often don't have luck moving the public in the direction of their policies, but they're good at polarizing public opinion, he's found in his research.

"They move members of their own party in the direction of their position, and they move members of the opposite party away from it," he said. "I wouldn't be surprised if the same dynamic happens with the U.S. Department of Education."

The Department of Education, its offices, and its programs are in statute

Today, the department oversees an annual budget of about \$80 billion, covering programs addressing prekindergarten through postsecondary education, as well as a student loan portfolio of more than \$1 trillion.

Congress would be needed to eliminate the agency because the department and most of its divisions and the programs it oversees are specifically laid out in statute.

During her hearing, McMahon said educators shouldn't worry that eliminating the department will result in the loss of federal funds for schools.

The department sends out billions of dollars annually in for schools with large populations of low-income students, under Title I, and for services for students with disabilities, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

It also distributes funding for teacher-preparation programs, services for English learners, and a number of other grant programs. An independent division of the department, the Institute of Education Sciences, oversees data collection, research grants, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

The scope of an order on dismantling the department that relies on executive authority alone would be necessarily limited, said Valant, from Brookings.

“That leaves out a whole lot of activity that would be kind of the most consequential when it comes to dismantling the department,” he said. “I think it’s going to be very important that we don’t read more into it than what it says, and if it goes farther than that ... I think we should expect that that’s going to end up in the court system.”

The department also enforces federal civil rights laws in schools through its office for civil rights. As he seeks to eliminate the agency, Trump’s administration has actually relied more heavily on this office to implement his political agenda.

The office has started investigating schools, state athletic associations, and at least one state education department over policies allowing transgender girls to play on girls’ sports teams—something Trump has cracked down on through an executive order threatening to withhold federal funds from schools that allow it to happen.

It also opened an investigation into the Denver school district following news that one of its high schools had opened an all-gender restroom.

More recently, the office for civil rights directed schools and colleges to eliminate race-based programs or risk losing federal funds.

Trump has already been scaling back the Education Department

During her confirmation hearing, McMahon didn’t reveal a firm plan for redistributing the Education Department’s functions across the federal government, but she floated ideas that appeared in the conservative public policy agenda Project 2025, penned by people who now work in Trump’s administration, such as moving oversight of IDEA to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the office for civil rights to the U.S. Department of Justice.

A bill is already filed in the U.S. Senate to move the agency’s responsibilities to other departments, and another bill pending in the U.S. House of Representatives proposes simply, in one sentence, to terminate the department on Dec. 31, 2026.

Even without congressional action and before McMahon’s arrival at the agency, the Trump administration has already dramatically scaled back department functions.

It’s canceled hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts and grants that funded research and data collection efforts, teacher training programs, and two different sets of regional centers that provide technical assistance to states and school districts to help them improve instruction and solve pressing problems.

It also canceled a national test that measures 17-year-olds’ performance in math and reading—part of the broader National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Additionally, more than 100 department employees have either been dismissed or placed on administrative leave, and the agency's chief human resources officer told employees last week in an email offering them a buyout of up to \$25,000 that a significant reduction in force was in the works, according to Politico.

The Education Department is the smallest Cabinet-level agency in terms of staffing.

Those steps, spurred by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency team, have been "more aggressive than you might have imagined when it comes to reductions in force, trying to lay off a lot of Department Education staff," said Petrilli, the Fordham Institute president. "But in terms of actually taking the department apart or shipping its pieces to other agencies, that takes Congress, and I don't think that's a priority right now for Congress, and I don't think you've got 60 votes in the Senate to do it."

Neal McCluskey, director of the libertarian Cato Institute's center for educational freedom, agreed.

"In part, that's because many may believe that the department should not exist and that it's not valuable, but the politics of it are kind of difficult," he said. "It's a distant bureaucracy for most people, and they may have no daily interaction with it, no sense of what it does, what its purpose is, but people hear education and they say, 'Well, that must be good.'"

Trump tried shuttering ED in his first term

The elimination of a Cabinet-level agency would be the most significant change to the federal bureaucracy in recent years.

The federal government hasn't shut down a major agency since the Interstate Commerce Commission closed in 1995. That agency wasn't Cabinet-level, unlike the Education Department. It's been more likely to add new agencies—such as the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau after the Great Recession and the Department of Homeland Security after the 9/11 attacks.

Several U.S. presidents in the 19th and 20th centuries took advantage of "presidential reorganization authority" to consolidate or reshape federal agencies. But that authority expired in 1984, making it so Congress would have to approve major reorganizations.

During his first term, in 2018, Trump proposed merging the Education and Labor departments into the Department of Education and the Workforce, but that proposal soon fizzled. He also proposed merging many of the department's key funding streams, such as Title I, into block grants distributed to the states.

Before that, President Obama in 2012 pushed Congress to pass a bill that would eliminate the Commerce Department, but the bill failed.

Republican President Ronald Reagan ran on ending the energy and education departments, but Congress accomplished neither during his two terms as president.

However, Reagan's first education secretary, Terrel Bell developed a plan for dramatically scaling back the federal role in education, which included a blueprint for dispersing the Education Department's functions across the federal government.

Under that plan, the office for civil rights, for example, would have moved to the Department of Justice, student loan programs would have moved to the Treasury Department, and department grants would have become block grants with fewer rules attached.

The plan, however, faced resistance from Congress, and Bell himself became increasingly convinced of a need for federal leadership in education.

Many of those suggestions, however, resurfaced in Project 2025.

Note: The Trump Administration has opened an online portal where parents and other community members can report educators and schools that use diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

California Educators Nervous About Federal Plan to Investigate Schools with Diversity Initiatives

New online portal open for complaints

By Diana Lambert
EdSource
March 7, 2025

The Trump administration doubled down on its plan to end diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in the nation's schools last week by opening an online portal where parents and other community members can report educators and schools that use the programs.

The announcement about the [EndDEI.Ed.Gov](https://www.ed.gov/EndDEI) portal came on Feb. 27 — the day before a deadline for schools to end diversity and equity programs or risk losing federal funding. The DEI prohibition was issued in a Valentine's Day missive from the U.S. Department of Education.

The online reporting tool has teachers and other school staff nervous.

"I can say, in general, that there's a sense of concern (among educators)," said Steven Frazer, president of Associated Chino Teachers, Chino Valley Unified's teachers union. "... A tool to report teachers, who could just be making sure that their classroom is a safe place for all students, who could potentially be vilified. So, it's certainly a unique and uncertain, unfortunate climate right now for educators."

The San Bernardino County school district, which has a conservative school board, has little diversity, equity and inclusion programming, Frazer said. Despite that, teachers in the district feel susceptible to being reported to federal authorities.

The district's board has already been at odds with the teachers union and the state over a board policy that required teachers and school staff to notify parents if they believe a child is transgender.

Frazer is concerned that the White House effort to end diversity, equity and inclusion will embolden the school district to disregard a California law requiring ethnic studies classes to be offered next school year. There is also concern for the future of clubs that support students of color and LGBTQ youth, among others, he said.

“Things like that, outlets like that, are what make school a safe place for many students,” Frazer said. “A lot of students don’t get recognized enough at home, and so school is an outlet for them. And really, what keeps their mental state positive, what encourages them to learn and be happy and successful, is being able to meet in groups like this.”

Definitions of DEI vary

DEI has become a divisive issue in recent years, with the term’s definition and value dependent on a person’s political ideology.

“For me, it means ensuring that the marginalized are included and that equity is served, in that everyone can receive what they need to thrive, especially in a school district,” said Janice Rooths, executive director of the Center Against Racism and Trauma, which serves the state’s Inland Empire region. “And so, when you say that everyone should get what they need to thrive, it applies to every student.”

Schools with successful DEI programs offer teachers and administrators cultural sensitivity training and ensure students understand that using negative racial epithets or other threatening words is unacceptable, Rooths said.

On the other side, critics of DEI see it as dividing students, or making white students feel uncomfortable or bad about themselves. They say DEI focuses on race and ethnicity over merit.

“For years, parents have been begging schools to focus on teaching their kids practical skills like reading, writing, and math, instead of pushing critical theory, rogue sex education and divisive ideologies, but their concerns have been brushed off, mocked, or shut down entirely,” said Tiffany Justice, a co-founder of Moms for Liberty, in a statement included in a U.S. Department of Education news release announcing the portal.

Moms for Liberty is a far-right organization that has advocated against school curricula that include LGBTQ rights and instruction on race and ethnicity.

Portal opens just before deadline

The End DEI portal is separate from a webpage that already collects complaints of discrimination on the Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights website.

“The U.S. Department of Education is committed to ensuring all students have access to meaningful learning free of divisive ideologies and indoctrination,” according to a media release announcing the portal.

In its Feb. 14 letter, the U.S. Department of Education letter claims that white and Asian American students have been discriminated against, and that “educational institutions have toxically indoctrinated students with the false premise that the United States is built upon ‘systemic and structural racism.’ ”

The letter states that schools must cease using race preferences in their admissions, hiring, promotion, scholarship, prizes, administrative support, sanctions, discipline and other programs and activities, including race-based graduation ceremonies and dorms.

On Feb. 21, the California Department of Education and State Board of Education issued a joint statement to reassure state residents and school officials that federal laws regarding public education have not changed,

and that executive orders from the White House and memos from the U.S. Department of Education cannot modify or override them.

“We advise continued compliance with state and federal laws, and recommend that administrators and governing boards consult legal counsel regarding the impact of any potential federal actions,” the statement read. “If federal laws or regulations do change, we will provide guidance and take action as needed in continued support of California’s students and local educational agencies.”

In his own letter to school district leaders, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond said the California Department of Education and other state agencies will consider legal action if the federal government attempts to freeze or cut funding because districts have diversity, equity and inclusion programs in place.

Teachers unions file lawsuits

The U.S. Department of Education letter and its demands have already resulted in at least two lawsuits. Both include the nation’s largest teachers’ unions. The American Federation of Teachers and American Sociological Association filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Education on Feb. 25, and the National Education Association and the American Civil Liberties Union did the same on Wednesday.

The lawsuits urge the court to block the Department of Education from enforcing a directive that they say undermines civil rights, stifles free speech and dictates what educators can teach.

“Across the country, educators do everything in their power to support every student, no matter where they live, how much their family earns, or the color of their skin — ensuring each feels safe, seen, and is prepared for the future,” said Becky Pringle, president of the National Education Association.

“Now, the Trump administration is threatening to punish students, parents and educators in public schools for doing just that: fostering inclusive classrooms where diversity is valued, history is taught honestly, and every child can grow into their full brilliance.”

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Paul Rosencrans, Director of Transportation

Date: March 14, 2025
Phone Number: 457-3103

Regarding: Award Recommendation for Proposal 25-17, Pupil Transportation Services-Special Education Programs.

The purpose of this communication is to inform the Board that Staff will be recommending the award of Proposal 25-17, Pupil Transportation Services – Special Education Programs, to Zūm Services, Inc. at the April 09, 2025, Board Meeting.

Zūm was selected as the best value proposer and is being recommended with an estimated annual cost of \$16,721,083—over \$1 million less than First Student’s proposal of \$17,826,220.


Staff conducted site visits to Zūm’s facilities in San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles, receiving strong endorsements from district leaders. Additionally, other Council of Great City Schools districts provided glowing recommendations.

Zūm prioritizes driver experience and will hire current First Student drivers in good standing. They offer above-market wages, medical, dental, vision and 401(k) benefits with company match, and a supportive work environment, leading to high employee satisfaction and reduced turnover.

Zūm has successfully negotiated CBAs with local unions in major California districts, including LAUSD, SFUSD, Oakland USD, and San Bernardino City USD, ensuring a smooth transition and the retention of all eligible drivers and attendants from previous contractors.

Zūm sets a higher standard of service, achieving 98% on-time performance and a 4.9/5 parent rating. Their comprehensive solution includes door-to-door transportation and a real-time tracking app for parents and administrators, enhancing communication and operational transparency.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Paul Rosencrans at 457-3103.

Cabinet Approval: 

Name and Title: Paul Idsvoog, Chief Operations and Classified Labor Management Officer

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Amanda Harvey, Nutrition Services Director

Date: March 14, 2025
Phone Number: 457-6278

Regarding: Nutrition Services U.S. Department of Agriculture A Produce Safety University

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board with information regarding the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Produce Safety University (PSU). PSU is a one-week experiential learning program offered by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service that immerses child nutrition professionals in the produce supply chain and provides them with tools and knowledge to address real life scenarios, critically analyze and respond to food safety issues, and teach others critical produce safety concepts and practices.

The California Department of Education (CDE) is able to nominate four individuals annually to attend the USDA's PSU and this year they chose to select Fresno Unified as one of their nominees. The Farm to School Coordinator, Tacu Vang, submitted his application and was selected to attend the PSU this year. He will be attending PSU in Fresno March 31, 2025 - April 04, 2025, at the Jordan Agriculture Research Center at Fresno State. We are eager to bring this knowledge back to the district and share it with staff.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Amanda Harvey at 457-6278.

Cabinet Approval: 

Name and Title: Paul Idsvog, Chief Operations and Classified Labor Management Officer