



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on May 19, 2023

Abolish the Department of Education, Says Former Education Secretary DeVos

Former Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said Tuesday that the Department of Education should be shuttered because it has “no good reason ... to exist” and is used to force the progressive agenda on local schools.

“I’m suggesting shutting it down,” DeVos [said](#) at the 2023 Bradley Prizes ceremony in Washington. “There is no good reason for the U.S. Department of Education to exist, but when you consider the fact that it was not founded until 1979, as a pay-off to the teachers’ unions, and essentially functions as a political arm of the teachers’ unions and all of their allies today, it’s kind of like the bit in the horse’s mouth. It’s a small thing on the entire beast, but it totally controls the rest of education across the country.”



AP Images
Betsy DeVos

Of course, transferring control of education from parents, churches, and local governments to state and, ultimately, federal bureaucracies has [always been](#) the aim of public education. The more the federal government funded schools, the more control it gained. The culmination of this process was the creation of the Department of Education, which put Uncle Sam firmly in the driver’s seat in any school-related matters.

“During the Obama administration,” said DeVos, “the tendency to try to dictate and control the entire educational spectrum from kindergarten through post-secondary education has really come out of an agency that is so agenda-driven, and we’re seeing it manifest in most local school buildings.”

Today, the Biden Education Department not only seeks to be the diversity police for the nation’s public schools but also wants to [force them](#) to allow “transgender” students to participate in sex-segregated sports and use restrooms and locker rooms without regard to their biological sex.

“Clearly [the Education Department] has taken center stage in the culture wars ... and been a central actor in using the coercive power of federal funding to force compliance around a set of cultural markers and expectations,” [observed](#) political-science professor Jeffrey Polet. “It has certainly not been immune from using its influence to advance a progressive agenda and identity politics.”

DeVos found this to be true during her tenure as secretary of education under former President Donald Trump. In an [interview](#) with the American Enterprise Institute last June, DeVos said, “For any of the creative reforms that we advanced, we really had to essentially work around most of the career staff.” She attributed that more to their career orientation than to their ideology; but, as Polet pointed out, “the internal logic of centralized bureaucratic enterprises will always be progressive, in no small part because the ... employees ... are overwhelmingly progressive in their views.”



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In that same interview, DeVos claimed she had “said often” that she thought the Education Department should be abolished, a point she [reiterated](#) the next month at the first national Moms for Liberty summit in Florida.

DeVos isn’t the first Education Secretary to call for her own department’s repeal. President Ronald Reagan’s first two Education Secretaries — only the second and third people ever to hold the post — both believed in getting rid of their department, at least initially. Unfortunately, they were unable to convince Congress of that, proving Reagan’s adage that “a government bureau is the nearest thing to eternal life we’ll ever see on this earth.”

Even DeVos doesn’t want to eliminate all the Education Department’s functions. She said Tuesday that the responsibility for enforcing certain civil-rights laws and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act could be transferred to other agencies — even though those laws, for the most part, are just as unconstitutional as the Department of Education.

Still, trying to reform the department while leading it, and then calling for its repeal, earned DeVos the Bradley Prize, which is awarded annually by the Milwaukee-based Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation “to individuals whose extraordinary work exemplifies the foundation’s mission to restore, strengthen and protect the principles and institutions of American exceptionalism,” according to a [press release](#) announcing DeVos’ award.

“It’s a battle of ideas,” Bradley Foundation President Rick Graber told the [Daily Caller](#). “Particularly on the education front, you can see progress right now. We have to continue that progress. Fight for the kids, fight for families. That’s what can make a difference.”



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