Trump closes buyout programme to new resignations as judge lifts hold



A programme designed to shrink the number of US government employees by incentivising resignations has closed to new volunteers.

On 28 January, administration officials offered more than 2m federal workers the choice to resign and receive eight months of pay.Administration officials said in an online announcement that employees choosing to leave were "not expected to work", except in rare cases.The offer was available to full-time federal employees - excluding certain staff such as postal workers, members of the military, immigration and national security officials.

The program was announced in an email with the subject line "Fork in the Road" – which resembledThe American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and other unions called the offer illegal.They argued that the offer was a threat pushing employees to resign or risk losing their jobs without any payout. The email noted that those who declined the offer could not be given full assurances that their jobs would not be eliminated.

The unions also said there was no guarantee that those who took the offer would get a full eight months of pay because Congress, which appropriates such funds, had not approved government funding .After initially granting an injunction pausing the program, Judge O'Toole said that the unions do not have the "required direct stake" in the issue to challenge it in court.

The White House had no immediate comment on the rulinI n a statement, AFGE National President Everett Kelley called the ruling a "setback" but said that the union's lawyers were assessing next step, An announcement on the website of the US Office of Personnel Management said the program was closed as of 19:20 Eastern Time on Wednesday.