

Former AID Staff still awaiting pension payments. *Devex*, 2 March 2026

Pension tension

Some [USAID](#) workers thrust into retirement by the agency's purge were "lucky" in the sense that they at least had pensions coming their way, as opposed to those who were fired outright without any sort of financial cushion. Some missed retirement by mere months.

But "lucky" is a relative term in this new era of development.

[Many retirees have yet to see a dime](#) and are gasping for financial air. That includes **Blake Chrystal**, a former USAID foreign service officer who was forced into retirement in July after nearly 20 years at the agency.

"After the career that I've had, how hard I've worked and the sacrifices I've made, to find myself without any income, without being able to pay for the upfront medical costs for my kids, and not knowing if I'm going to be able to pay my rent next month — I just never thought I'd be in this situation," he tells my colleague Michael Igoe. The widower and father of three estimates he's owed delayed annuity payments of \$60,000 to \$70,000.

The delays are mostly because **the U.S. government was unprepared for the mass exodus**. What was already a multistep bureaucratic process has been overwhelmed by the sheer number of people forced into retirement, Michael writes. The agency office in charge of retirement benefits went from handling roughly **15 to 30 retirements a year to a sudden influx of over 700** in 2025, according to **Randy Chester** of the American Foreign Service Association.

"It's just one insult after another insult," he says. "They just had no clue as to what they were doing other than living up to their dream of causing and inflicting pain to everyone they could, and that's what they were successful at, but nothing else."

Some retirees who talked to Michael are hesitant to even bring up their situations. As one official put it: "I don't even talk about it as an issue, because I feel very lucky that someday I will get money."

But it's an emotional waiting game for many. While Chrystal says he feels fortunate to at least be getting some source of income, the wallop of losing a job that was central to his identity is now coupled with not being able to cover his children's basic expenses.

"That just makes me feel like I'm not a good father," he says.