Breaking Down Elon Musk's Destructive Legacy at DOGE

How Donald Trump and Musk's DOGE Waged a Deeply Unpopular Assault on Federal Agencies, Making Life Harder and More Expensive for Families

As Elon Musk's time in the second Trump Administration comes to a close, the devastating impact of his so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) is undeniable: reckless cuts to critical programs and mass firings of government employees have increased costs and administrative burdens for millions of Americans. From making it harder for families to access Social Security and food assistance to gutting funding for medical research and disease prevention to putting people's most sensitive personal data at risk, Musk leaves the White House with a deeply unpopular legacy of destruction.

Below are just a few of the ways Elon Musk weaponized DOGE during his time in the Trump Administration to devastate core government operations and programs – making life harder and more expensive for families and undermining U.S. economic prosperity. Though Musk may formally exit Washington, the chaos he unleashed will continue to harm families and communities. As Americans struggle to fill the gaps that DOGE cuts have left in their household budgets, DOGE staffers remain embedded in agencies and are actively working with the Trump Administration to further gut the programs families and communities rely on.

Over his 130-day reign, Musk used DOGE to gut the critical programs Americans count on – from Social Security to veterans benefits to food and housing assistance.

- Musk's DOGE has made it harder for people to get their Social Security benefits. DOGE significantly cut staff at the Social Security Administration (SSA) – resulting in website crashes, field office staff reductions of more than 25% in some communities, longer wait times, over a million hours per year wasted on unnecessary travel, and reports that "Social Security is breaking down."

- Trump and Musk's reckless agency cuts have propelled veteran mental health care services into turmoil and undermined the operation of the national veterans' crisis hotline. DOGE is still planning mass layoffs at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) – degrading customer service and extending wait times for the nearly 9 million veterans who receive their health care from the VA.

- Often with no clear communication or justification, Trump and Musk froze the funding that keeps families fed and schools and community service organizations open – ending programs that provide food assistance to schools and food banks by allowing them to buy from farmers and providing for shipments of fresh foods.

- DOGE also cut programs that fund [child care initiatives](), [tribal colleges](), [libraries]() and [local museums](), and [local nonprofits]() that provide everything from tutoring to support for child victims of abuse.

- Trump and Congressional Republicans are plotting [additional slashes]() to programs that would [raise costs]() on basic goods for American families.

  - The GOP tax bill that the House recently passed makes devastating spending cuts – including over $1 trillion in cuts to Medicaid, health care, and food assistance – that will deprive millions of basic needs programs. At the same time, the bill dramatically cuts taxes for billionaires. [Recent analysis]() shows the top 1 percent of people would receive tax cuts *three times* the size of those for people with incomes in the bottom 60 percent.

Musk leveraged DOGE to benefit himself and his cronies at the expense of American families – by making it easier for billionaires and corporations to evade the rules and regulations in place to protect consumers and creating bigger loopholes for themselves.

- The Trump Administration and Musk's DOGE [targeted]() the IRS to let wealthy and corporate tax cheats off the hook and make it harder for families to get help when they need it. Thanks to DOGE, the IRS has lost nearly one-third of its [auditing capacity](), and may lose [as much as]() 40% of its total workforce. Recent analysis finds that reducing IRS staff, including from the compliance and enforcement departments, could cost the government as much as $2.4 trillion in [lost revenue]() over the next decade.

  - At the same time, Trump, Musk, and Billy Long – Trump's [dangerous pick]() to lead the IRS – are planning to hand [private tax preparation companies]() like Intuit and H&R Block a massive giveaway by eliminating a [popular tool]() that lets Americans file their taxes directly with the IRS for free.

- While Musk's X pursues a new digital payment platform with Visa, DOGE [dismantled]() the agency specifically tasked with protecting consumers – the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) – making it easier for big banks, giant corporations, and Musk's [cronies and own companies]() to cheat families. Under DOGE's direction, the CFPB [slashed staff](), dropped investigations into exploitative [credit]() [card companies]() and [subprime auto lenders](), and gutted rules that reined in [payday lenders]().

- Musk also [refused]() to publicly disclose his many conflicts of interest or get the waiver [required]() for working on matters on which he is conflicted – even as he gained access to sensitive systems that hold confidential personal and business information.

  - While head of DOGE, Musk had influence on the agencies that [regulate]() his companies and [grant them]() billions in [government contracts](). Musk peddled [his]()

own companies' technology even though it had not been approved for government use. Simultaneously, the Trump Administration undermined federal oversight of these activities – including by firing inspector generals for 17 agencies and by forcibly ousting other government watchdogs.

- ○ Musk may have helped his companies avoid accountability from 11 agencies and 65 actions that his companies were facing at the start of this year.

Musk is leaving a trail of devastation at the agencies that keep families and communities healthy, safe, and thriving.

- DOGE, potentially unlawfully, cut or paused grants that keep families and communities safe and resilient.

  - ○ DOGE has frozen billions of dollars in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding that helps communities prepare for and respond to natural disasters – like the deadly tornadoes that recently ripped through the U.S. south and midwest, damaging homes, businesses, and livelihoods. Because of DOGE cuts, many victims are still awaiting FEMA assistance.

  - ○ And DOGE cuts to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Weather Service (NWS) will make it significantly harder for communities to get the public safety and disaster information they need when extreme weather looms.

  - ○ DOGE has also attempted to claw back more than $12 billion in public health funding that states and cities use to support infectious disease prevention, addiction care, and mental health programs.

- DOGE and the Trump Administration cut staff at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and either cancelled or froze billions of dollars in research funds from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and other science agencies – severely limiting U.S. medical innovation, leaving communities facing health crises stranded, and making families more vulnerable to preventable diseases.

  - ○ Already, the Trump Administration has cancelled nearly $3 billion in NIH awards, $1.4 billion in NSF grants, and has threatened to cancel billions more for government-funded universities. Universities of all sizes will be forced to cut staff, forgo hiring, and admit fewer graduate students.

- Beyond the acute health threats that Trump and Musk's science cuts pose to families, severe cuts to research funding threaten our country's future prosperity: Analysis by

the Institute for Macroeconomic and Policy Analysis found that cutting NIH funding by 50% – a threshold Trump and DOGE have surpassed – could decrease U.S. GDP in the long run by 3.7% and federal revenues by 4.2%.

Musk and DOGE jeopardized confidential data by demanding access to sensitive IT systems with no regard for security – even handing over personal data to shady private companies.

- Musk and DOGE demanded illegal access to the sensitive systems that house confidential personal and business data – including financial information from Treasury, health records from SSA and Health and Human Services, employee data of federal employees at the Office of Personnel Management, immigration status from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and tax data at the IRS. Court filings and whistleblower reports indicate that Musk and DOGE employees are unqualified, untrustworthy, untrained, unvetted, and lack proper security clearances.

  - Musk also reportedly orchestrated expanding government contracts for the secretive data firm, Palantir, founded by major GOP donor Peter Thiel. So far, these awards have totaled nearly $1 billion.

The last thing Americans want is Trump or Elon Musk raising costs and increasing administrative burdens for American families while undermining our national prosperity.

- Over the last three months, sentiment toward DOGE among independents has swung 29 points **against** DOGE, from (+7) to (-22) – with voters saying that they do not believe DOGE will make government work better for them.

- Other polling shows that:

  - 65% of Americans believe Musk has too much power, while 67% of Americans believe that Musk benefiting from government contracts and subsidies while leading DOGE was corrupt.

  - Nearly 60% of Americans think that DOGE has made cuts to broad cuts to programs and staff "recklessly."

  - 85% of Americans oppose cuts to Social Security – including 75% who *strongly* oppose – while 72% oppose cuts to food assistance.

  - As Trump and Musk take a hacksaw to federal research funding, more than 70% of Americans support an *increase in* spending for the CDC and NIH.

  - 64% of Americans – including 63% of Independents – are concerned about the loss of expertise from mass firings of federal workers.