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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6200

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February 7, 2025

Michelle King
Acting Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Acting Commissioner King:

We write to express deep concern that, after infiltrating the Department of Treasury's federal payment systems on January 31, 2025, associates of Elon Musk – ostensibly operating under the direction of President Trump and the “Department of Government Efficiency” (DOGE) have now obtained access to data systems at the Social Security Administration (SSA). On February 6, 2025, *Semafor* reported that DOGE is seeking to access—or have already accessed—SSA's systems.¹

As the central hub for Americans' most sensitive personal and financial information and the nation's largest benefit-paying agency, DOGE's actions represent a two-front invasion on Americans' financial security and privacy. The information collected and housed at the agency could have significant commercial value as well as competitive advantage for individuals seeking to use it for financial gain. Likewise, it could be misappropriated to target American citizens and businesses for political or exploitative means.

SSA administers the three largest federal-benefit programs, the Old-Age Survivor's Insurance, Disability Insurance, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. Collectively, SSA pays over \$1.3 trillion in monthly benefits to over 70 million Americans each month. SSA also provides support to administer other federal programs and laws, including Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP, eVerify, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and the Help America Vote Act, and verifies SSNs to federal and state agencies and employers.

As such, SSA systems include the most sensitive personally identifiable information and personal health information for tens of millions of seniors, adults, and children. This includes Americans' Social Security Numbers; bank and credit card information; birth and marriage

¹ <https://www.semafor.com/article/02/06/2025/inside-doges-march-with-the-social-security-administration-soon-to-come>

certificates; pension information; home and work addresses; school records; citizenship status; immigration or naturalization records; health care providers' contact information; family court records; employment and employer records; psychological or psychiatric health records; hospitalization records; addiction treatment; and test for or records of HIV/AIDS. These records are handled and operated by career civil servants under stringent federal and state privacy laws and regulations to protect Americans' health and financial information. There is no reason non-government political operatives would need access to sensitive payment systems.

Federal laws protect sensitive personal and financial information from improper disclosure and misuse, including by barring disclosure to individuals who lack a lawful and legitimate need for it. We and the American public have not been made aware of any legitimate purpose for DOGE to access such information. Moreover, the Privacy Act of 1974 as amended (5 U.S.C. 552a, Public Law 93-579), protects Americans against an unwarranted invasion of their privacy related to the disclosure of their personal information. And in so doing, it requires each federal agency to publish in the Federal Register information related to how and why it is accessing a specific system of records—data that are collected, maintained, used, or disseminated that contain personally identifiable information. No justification has been published related to DOGE actions at SSA or otherwise.

Without appropriate oversight, transparency, and accountability, our nation's health care, retirement and disability systems—and the privacy of millions of Americans—are at the political whims of President Trump, Congressional Republicans, and DOGE. For this reason, we request that you respond to the following questions no later than February 14, 2025:

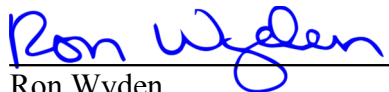
1. Has DOGE, or any individuals or entities operating under the guise of or direction of DOGE (including such individuals who may have been onboarded to the Agency and received an Agency or Departmental email address) requested and/or received access to any SSA system that is used in determining eligibility or benefit amount of Social Security or SSI benefits?
 - a. If so, who granted such access, to which systems, and for what specific purposes? Please name each system and provide the names of individuals who have been given access to such system.
 - b. Under what legal authority did SSA grant such access? Please provide a detailed description of this authority and copies of all communication between individuals associated with the “Department of Government Efficiency” and SSA systems.
 - c. For each individual who has been given access to SSA data systems since January 20, 2025, please provide information on:
 - i. The agency to which each such individual has been onboarded (or working as a contractor for) and whether an individual who may have been onboarded to a different agency has been given an email address for either SSA;

- ii. Which federal forms each such individual completed relating to background checks (i.e. SF-85, SF-85P, SF 85P-S, SF-86);
 - iii. Whether the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) completed a background check for each such individual;
 - iv. Whether the individuals have used their data access privileges consistent with any restrictions based on their respective security clearance levels;
 - v. What trainings on security, health information privacy, cybersecurity, financial, fraud, or other trainings required of SSA or their contractors these individuals have undertaken and when.
 - d. Please provide a list of queries run on each such system by each user, since January 20, 2025, including dates and usernames.
 - e. Please provide a thorough accounting of the information each individual reviewed, modified, accessed, deleted, or otherwise edited under such system.
 - f. For any information that has been modified, edited, or deleted, please provide an accounting of the variables, entries, and the exact changes made, as well as for what purpose.
 - g. Please provide details on any information from any such systems that were downloaded, copied, transferred, or otherwise removed from the Agency. Please specify which data, by what means they were downloaded or transferred, and to whom or what entity.
2. Has DOGE, or any individuals or entities operating under the direction of DOGE gained access to SSA databases that include personally identifiable information, wage or tax information, or personal health information?
 - a. If so, which data have been reviewed, modified, deleted, or otherwise edited or removed, copied, or downloaded or otherwise transferred by these individuals?
 - b. Under what legal authority did SSA grant such access? Please provide a detailed description of this authority and copies of all communication between individuals or entities operating under the direction of DOGE and SSA officials related to the granting of this access.
 - c. How many individuals does this affect? Have these individuals been notified that their information has been accessed and for what purposes in accordance with the requirements of the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, and Section 1106 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1306)? Please provide documentation.
 - d. To the extent personally identifiable information were accessed since January 20, 2025, please provide the System of Record Notice included in the Federal Register reflective of this access.
3. Have any private or commercial servers been connected or integrated into SSA data systems to review, edit, modify, access, delete, move or otherwise change data?

- a. If so, please explain the origin of such servers and provide documentation related to testing and validating controls to ensure no new vulnerabilities were introduced into SSA data systems upon use.
 - b. For any data that were moved to a private or commercial server, please show how that system has been reviewed and is abiding by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) special publication 800-171, Protecting Controlled Unclassified Information in Nonfederal Systems and Organizations.²
 - c. For any data that were moved to a private or commercial server, please provide detailed information related to whether any safe storage standards are being employed.
4. Attempts to suspend federal payments have been reportedly attempted by individuals or entities operating under the direction of DOGE.³ We are deeply concerned that DOGE may attempt to stop lawful payments for Social Security and SSI benefit payments, deny benefits to individuals who are perceived to not support President Trump, or otherwise inflict financial harm on individuals.
- a. What steps have been taken to ensure that the data of individuals, beneficiaries, and health care providers are protected from unlawful payment suspensions or data leaks?
 - b. What specific steps have been taken to ensure compliance with current laws, guidances, and regulations to ensure that the use of these data will not interfere with timely payments of Social Security and SSI benefits?
 - c. What specific steps have been taken to ensure compliance with current laws, guidances, and regulations to ensure that personally identifiable information that is held on SSA systems is not being utilized for politically motivated purposes?

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Finance

² <https://csrc.nist.gov/pubs/sp/800/171/r3/final>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/06/us/politics/trump-musk-usaid.html>