

Anti-Elon Musk Protests Ramp Up as DOGE Impact Widens

Story by Associated Press

Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, who is leading the DOGE gutting of federal agencies, has become a focus of protestors.

Donald Trump is the president, but billionaire Elon Musk is the focus for thousands of Democratic activists undertaking a protest campaign to fight the Trump administration's push to gut federal health, education and human services agencies.

Hundreds of protests were scheduled outside congressional offices and Tesla dealerships, with organizers hoping to send a pointed message to members of Congress who are on recess this week.

The backlash still hasn't approached the intensity of protests during and after Trump's first inauguration eight years ago. But a loose coalition of Democrats and progressives is coalescing around Musk's rise as Trump's top lieutenant and his purge of the federal bureaucracy.

Musk backlash

"He's a major weak link in the MAGA coalition," Ezra Levin, co-founder of the progressive group Indivisible, said of Musk. "I can't think of something that polls worse than the richest man in the world is coming after your Social Security check or your Meals on Wheels or your Head Start."

Indivisible, which claims more than 1,300 local chapters nationwide, is encouraging members to protest at the offices of their members of Congress, regardless of political party. The group also offered a step-by-step guide for protesting at dealerships for Tesla, Musk's electric vehicle company.

The memo encourages protesters to stay on sidewalks and public spaces and to avoid any actions that might directly interfere with business operations, such as blocking entrances or trespassing on private property. It also calls for Tesla protesters to stay on message: “This is about Musk’s political takeover, not Tesla, SpaceX, or X as companies.”

A push to ‘fight oligarchy’

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders is launching what he’s calling “a national tour to fight oligarchy” with stops in working-class districts of Iowa and Nebraska this week.

Democratic National Committee Chair Ken Martin is hitting the road for the first time as party leader as well. Like the protesters, Martin is expected to seize on Musk’s role. During a meeting with labor leaders in Pittsburgh, for example, he plans to highlight Musk’s recent focus on the Department of Labor, which could put “the integrity of data like the unemployment rate and inflation rate at risk, which is important for a stable U.S. economy and, by extension, working people,” Muldavin said.

Aware of the intense displeasure from their party’s base, many House Democrats plan to be proactive.

Expanding influence

The House Democratic Policy and Communications Committee issued a memo ahead of the recess instructing Democrats to embrace “nine days of visibility” and said it was essential for members to host one town hall, in-person or via telephone, and at least one community event that highlights the “devastating impacts” of Trump and Musk’s actions.

The wave of protests comes at a critical moment as fractured Democrats struggle to stop the Republican president’s purge of the federal bureaucracy, which features

thousands of layoffs inside departments focused on public health, education, veterans affairs and human services, among others.

In some cases, Musk's team is trying — with Trump's blessing but without congressional approval — to shutter entire agencies, including the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Department of Education and the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Trump has defended the cuts as necessary to eliminate waste and fraud. And he has praised Musk's work with his Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, saying it has found "shocking" evidence of wasteful spending. He signed an executive order expanding Musk's influence.

Musk, meanwhile, has defended the swift and extensive cuts he's pushing across the federal government while acknowledging there have been mistakes.

The Trump-Musk agenda

Democrats in Congress condemn the moves as dangerous, but without control of either chamber of Congress, there is little they can do to stop the Trump administration aside from turning to the courts. Still, three of the nation's largest progressive groups — Indivisible, MoveOn and the Working Families Party — are coordinating this week's protests to send a clear message to elected officials in both major political parties that they must do more.

Still, Democratic members of Congress may face their own voters' fury.

MoveOn, which boasts a membership of nearly 10 million, is hosting dozens of rallies outside town halls and congressional offices for those members who do not host public events. The group will focus on "persuadable House Republicans whose votes will be crucial to opposing the Trump-Musk agenda," according to a preview of its recess week plan. But there will also be rallies targeting House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, both of New York, among other Democrats.

“We are seeing a true resurgence in energy opposing what Trump, Musk and Republicans are doing to our country,” MoveOn executive director Rahna Epting said, adding that “people are mad as hell.”

‘Not my Presidents Day’ protests

On Monday, protesters against Trump and his policies braved frigid temperatures in parts of the U.S., shouting “No kings on Presidents Day” in East Coast cities and attempting to enter the Arizona Statehouse to oppose a bill that would bolster fast-changing federal immigration enforcement.

In Florida and California, local media outlets reported on hundreds of protesters carrying out “Not my Presidents Day” protests. The “No Kings” theme was orchestrated by the 50501 Movement, and marked the second set of protests crisscrossing the nation in less than two weeks. A similar nationwide event on Feb. 5 drew participants in dozens of cities. Both sets of rallies denounced Trump and Musk, the leader of Trump’s new Department of Government Efficiency, a government organization designed to slash federal spending.

Nearly 1,000 people marched in the snow from the Statehouse in Boston to City Hall, chanting “Elon Musk has got to go” and other slogans. The temperature was below freezing, with wind chills in the teens.

More executive orders expected

On Tuesday, President Trump was set to sign new executive orders from his Florida home while his first joint TV interview with adviser Elon Musk airs in prime time.

Trump and Musk, head of the new Department of Government Efficiency, gave their first joint interview to Sean Hannity of Fox News Channel. The interview was taped on Friday at the White House and is set to air as Musk leads Trump’s effort to cut federal spending and slash the federal workforce.

In an excerpt from the interview that Fox News released on Sunday, Musk said he “used to be adored by the left” but “less so these days” because of the work he’s doing at Trump’s direction.

“They call it Trump derangement syndrome. You don’t realize how real this is until you can’t reason with people,” Musk said, adding that normal conversations with Democrats about the president are impossible because “it’s like they’ve become completely irrational.”

Associated Press writers Scott Bauer in Madison, Wisconsin; and Sejal Govindarao in Phoenix contributed to this report.

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