

Insane Musk aides gain access to sensitive Treasury Department payment system

Story by Jeff Stein

Billionaire Elon Musk's deputies have gained access to a sensitive Treasury Department system responsible for trillions of dollars in U.S. government payments after the administration ousted a top career official at the department, according to three people who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe government deliberations.

On Friday, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent approved access to the Treasury's payments system for a team led by Tom Krause, a Silicon Valley executive working in concert with Musk's "Department of Government Efficiency," the people said.

David A. Lebryk, who served in nonpolitical roles at Treasury for several decades and had been the acting secretary before Bessent's confirmation, had refused to turn over access to Musk's surrogates, people familiar with the situation told The Washington Post. Trump officials placed Lebryk on administrative leave, and then he announced his retirement Friday in an email to colleagues.

Spokespeople for Treasury and DOGE declined to comment.

The sensitive systems, run by the Bureau of the Fiscal Service, control the flow of more than \$6 trillion annually. Tens of millions of people across the country rely on the systems. They are responsible for paying Social Security and Medicare benefits, salaries for federal personnel, payments to government contractors and grant recipients, and tax refunds, among tens of thousands of other functions.

Typically, only a small group of career employees control the payment systems, and former officials have said it is extremely unusual for anyone connected to political appointees to access them.

Musk has sought to exert sweeping control over the inner workings of the U.S. government, installing longtime surrogates at several agencies, including the Office of Personnel Management, which essentially handles federal human resources, and the General Services Administration, which manages real estate. DOGE is now housed in a White House office formerly known as the U.S. Digital Service but now called the U.S. DOGE Service and has broad visibility into technology across the government.

The New York Times was first to report that Musk's deputies had gained control of the systems.

Democrats have strongly criticized the idea of giving Musk surrogates access to the payment systems.

“To put it bluntly, these payment systems simply cannot fail, and any politically motivated meddling in them risks severe damage to our country and the economy,” Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Oregon) said in a letter to Bessent on Friday. “I can think of no good reason why political operators who have demonstrated a blatant disregard for the law would need access to these sensitive, mission-critical systems.”