

# Elon Musk Pretends He's Leaving The Job He Supposedly Doesn't Have To Not Return To The Job He Supposedly Never Left



from the *political-kayfabe* dept  
**Mike Masnick**

There are a few ways to think about Elon Musk's announcement this week that he's **stepping back from DOGE**. The first is that he's leaving a job he officially doesn't have. The second is that he's returning to a job (Tesla CEO) that he's supposedly been doing this whole time. The third, and perhaps most interesting, is that none of this actually makes any sense at all.

**Too Much Free  
Time**

The announcement came during Tesla's latest earnings call (which was, to put it gently, not great). With Tesla's sales and profits plummeting while Musk has been busy redesigning (read: destroying) the entire US government, you might think focusing more on Tesla would be logical. But that assumes any of this is actually about logic.

Like so many Musk pronouncements, this one's mostly vaporware. Not only had this "stepping back" **been reported** weeks ago (though never confirmed), but if you look closely at what he actually said, he's not really leaving DOGE at all, even as **news headlines** claimed otherwise. He just claimed he would **spend less time on DOGE**, giving a bit more time to his many other companies.

He said he'll continue to spend a "day or two per week" on government issues "for as long as the president would like me to do so."

But, of course, according to official filings from the US government, **Elon Musk isn't even a part of DOGE**, an obvious lie that basically no one (other than the DOJ in sworn statements to a court) pretends are true.

Technically, Musk is a "special government employee" who supposedly can only advise the President, though in practice, **we know that's also not true**. He's basically running big parts of the government. And despite having no constitutionally-required appointment for such authority, he appears to be deciding what things can be cut, and shutting down entire agencies. While some have speculated the supposed "May" step down is because those SGE jobs are only supposed to last 130 days, apparently the government can issue waivers to allow those SGEs to stay on significantly longer.

And, really, Musk has **violated a ton of other rules** that apply to SGEs, including those around conflicts of interest, impartiality, and a ban on "partisan political activities." Given how much Musk has done that **involves a conflict of interest**, and his **ongoing partisan political activities**, it seems that he doesn't much care to follow the rules. So, the idea that anyone in this government cares about the supposed 130 day limit is laughable.

A closer reading of Musk's actual words shows **he's not really going anywhere**. He's just promising not to spend all his time in DC anymore. And even that comes with a rather significant caveat:

"I'll have to continue doing it for, I think, probably the remainder of the president's term, just to make sure that the waste and fraud that we stop does not come roaring back, which will do if it has the chance," Musk said

Let's talk about those savings Musk is so worried about protecting. There are basically three stories here, each more puzzling than the last.

First, there's the story of the incredible shrinking savings target. Musk started by promising to cut \$2 trillion from the federal budget right before the election. Post-election, perhaps realizing people might actually try to hold him to that number, it suddenly became **\$1 trillion**. A few weeks ago, he lowered expectations again to **\$150 billion**.

If you're playing at home, the difference between \$2 trillion and \$150 billion is... just about \$2 trillion.

The second story is about what's actually being cut. **Even the \$150 billion is nonsense** — not only has DOGE failed to demonstrate any actual waste or fraud (certainly no one's been charged with fraud), but the programs they're recklessly cutting are likely to **cost taxpayers way more than they save**. And the third story? That's about how DOGE counts its supposed savings. As **the NY Times detailed**, those numbers look to be pretty much fictional:

One of the group's largest claims, in fact, involves canceling a contract that did not exist. Although the government says it had merely asked for proposals in that case, and had not settled on a vendor or a price, Mr. Musk's group ignored that uncertainty and assigned itself a large and very specific amount of credit for canceling it. It said it had saved exactly \$318,310,328.30.

Even as the media keeps fact-checking these claims, DOGE just quietly makes random changes to its website, hoping no one notices. The NY Times caught them deleting entries that **triple-counted the same savings, confused "billion" with "million"**, and even claimed credit for canceling contracts that ended during **the George W. Bush administration**.

But the errors keep coming. Their second-biggest claimed savings? A supposedly canceled IRS contract worth \$1.9 billion that was **actually canceled under Biden**. Their third-biggest? A \$1.75 billion savings from canceling a vaccine nonprofit grant that **had already been paid in full**.

This might all be amusing if it weren't so stupid and causing so much damage. Even as Musk was publicly walking back expectations to \$150 billion in savings, DOGE's own website was still claiming \$160 billion. And then there's the matter of Musk's Twitter activity, where he seems to have discovered an entirely new category of fictional math, in which he will regularly and repeatedly retweet claims that disagree with his own admission that DOGE will only save \$150 billion.

The latest example? Musk enthusiastically amplifying claims about massive Social Security fraud. Here he is, just yesterday, retweeting someone claiming \$12.6 billion in monthly savings from supposedly removing "7 million scammers" from the system:

Elon Musk reposted



**Mila Joy** @MilaLovesJoe · 10h



This alone makes the Department of Government efficiency worth it.

D.O.G.E. has removed 7 MILLION scammers from the Social Security system so far.

If each fraudulent person was making just \$1800/mo, then D.O.G.E. just saved Americans \$12,600,000,000 A MONTH.

HOLY SMOKES!

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Age	Living Count (3/8)	Living Count (3/24)	Overall Change
120-129	3,467,066	1,671,715	-1,795,351
130-139	3,929,750	1,480,061	-2,449,689
140-149	3,548,746	1,108,994	-2,439,752
150-159	1,357,967	950,963	-407,004
Total			-7,091,796

There are several problems here. The first, as [Wired detailed](#), is that not a single part of this claim is true. The Social Security Administration [has long had systems](#) to prevent payments to deceased beneficiaries, including (but certainly not limited to) their automated processes to stop [anyone over 115](#) from receiving any payments at all. Which means, rather awkwardly for Musk's claims, none of these supposedly fraudulent recipients were actually receiving any money to begin with, and even if they were cut from the system, the savings would be \$0.

Actually, it would be worse than that, because the SSA had already considered this exact issue. A report shows they deliberately [chose not to update](#) death records for these super-elderly non-recipients, because doing so would cost far more than any theoretical fraud it might prevent. The few actual cases of payments to deceased beneficiaries are handled through other means.

More than anyone else in the world, Musk is in a position to find out what's really happening, but he's been repeating the false claims about Social Security for months now. And, hell, for a supposed genius, even he should be able to do the basic math and realize that if his SS savings alone were \$12.6 billion a month, that alone would basically equal the claimed \$150 billion in annual savings.

Even worse, right around the time that Musk was telling the world to maybe expect \$150 billion in savings, he retweeted some rando's account claiming DOGE had already saved nearly twice that:



That retweet claiming \$291.6 billion in savings came... three days before Musk announced at a cabinet meeting that savings for the entire fiscal year might reach \$150 billion. In a normal world, you might expect his supporters (or the media?) to notice this rather stark contradiction. But this isn't a normal world. Both numbers are somehow treated as equally valid, equally true, equally worth celebrating. There's a pattern here that goes beyond just bad math. Musk leads DOGE while government lawyers swear under oath that he doesn't. He's supposedly running Tesla while spending his time dismantling the federal government. He claims massive savings that don't actually exist. He retweets numbers that directly contradict the numbers he personally announced just days earlier.

The whole thing feels like it should collapse under the weight of its own contradictions. But it doesn't, because it was never meant to make sense. It's basically all [kayfabe](#) — that peculiar form of theatrical fakery where the audience chooses to believe despite knowing better.

The difference is that unlike wrestling, where the fakery is harmless entertainment, this performance is actively destroying what had been the most amazing democracy and economy on the planet. And that's a lot less fun to watch.

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