

World's Richest Whiner Mooch

Elon Musk on DOGE and why he doesn't want to "take responsibility for everything the administration's doing"

By

David Pogue

In four months, DOGE took the chainsaw to every federal department: 250,000 workers were fired or bought out; Musk even slashed grants and staffing at environmental agencies, like the EPA and NOAA, after decades of warning about the risks of climate change.

But Musk did not enjoy the pushback. There were acts of violence; death threats; lawsuits; mandatory re-hirings; and shouting matches with Cabinet members.

Tesla profits plummeted by 71%—and Musk's net worth dropped by \$100 billion.

Last month, Musk finally left Washington, but still intended to work on DOGE a day or two a week. And this past Tuesday, he offered "Sunday Morning" an interview at SpaceX's headquarters near Brownsville, at the southern tip of Texas.

"It's a bit unfair"

We knew we were in the right neighborhood when we saw a huge bust of Musk, installed by his admirers—and vandalized by his critics.

But the interview didn't get off to a smooth start.

I asked, "I noticed that all of your businesses involve a lot of components, a lot of parts. Do the tariffs and the trade wars affect any of this?"

"You know, tariffs always affect things a little bit," Musk replied.

"I'm wondering what your thought is on the ban on foreign students, the proposal. I mean, you were one of those kids, right?"

"Yeah. I mean, I think we wanna stick to, you know, the subject of the day, which is, like, spaceships, as opposed to, you know, presidential policy," Musk said.

"Oh, okay," I said. "I was told anything is good, but..."

"No, well—no," Musk replied.

But Musk was willing to talk about the DOGE firestorm. I asked him, "You've spoken about how much of a grind and a stress it was on you, and you know, Tesla's reputation took a hit, your reputation took a hit. People are very upset about [effects on] Social Security, and national parks, and air traffic, and food safety, and cancer research, Alzheimer's research. Now that you've had a chance to look at it, might there have been a different approach?"

Musk said, "Yeah, I think ... what was starting to happen was that, like, it's a bit unfair because, like, DOGE became the whipping boy for everything. So, if there was some cut, real or imagined, everyone would blame DOGE. I've had people think that, like, somehow DOGE is gonna stop them from getting their Social Security check, which is completely untrue."

•Musk calls for U.S. to "delete entire agencies" at home and "mind its own business" at times abroad

I asked, "I was just thinking about the, you know, 'move fast and break things,' you know, before you really understand what the agency does?"

"Yeah, I mean, I guess part of it is, like, is it depends on where you're coming from," Musk said. "I'm like a proponent of smaller government, not bigger government. So, now if somebody's a proponent of, you know, more government programs and bigger

government, and they see, 'Hey, DOGE is cutting all these government programs,' then they'll be fundamentally opposed to that because they just think the government should do more things. That's just a fundamental, I guess, ideological opinion.

"But my frank opinion of the government is that, like, the government is just, like, the DMV that got big, okay? So, when you say it like, 'Let's have the government do something,' you should think, 'Do you want the DMV to do it?'"

And then, Musk started talking about the Trump administration, without even being asked about Trump. "And you know, it's not like I agree with everything the administration does," said Musk. "So it's like, I mean, I agree with much of what the administration does. But we have differences of opinion. You know, there are things that I don't entirely agree with. But it's difficult for me to bring that up in an interview because then it creates a bone of contention. So then, I'm a little stuck in a bind, where I'm like, well, I don't wanna, you know, speak up against the administration, but I also don't wanna take responsibility for everything this administration's doing."

On the "Big, Beautiful Bill"

In Washington, federal workers say that DOGE has left the government's operations in disarray. And worst of all, it might have all been for nothing. Musk claims to have saved the government

\$175 billion so far (nowhere close to his original target of \$2 trillion, or even his revised target of \$1 trillion).

And that was before the president's new spending bill passed the House. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the president's proposed budget will add \$3.8 trillion to our debt over the next ten years. It's now being debated in the Senate.

Musk said, "I was, like, disappointed to see the massive spending bill, frankly, which increases the budget deficit, doesn't decrease it, and undermines the work that the DOGE team is doing."

I said, "I actually thought that, when this 'big, beautiful bill' came along, it'd be like, everything he's done on DOGE gets wiped out in the first year."

"I think a bill can be big or it can be beautiful," Musk laughed. "But I don't know if it could be both. My personal opinion."

And here is where the story gets a little complicated.

On Tuesday, right after our interview, CBS News released a clip of it to promote this very report. It was that part, where Musk criticizes Trump's spending bill, and his remarks became news. It went all the way to the White House, where the president was asked about Musk's criticism of the bill. Within 24 hours, Musk

announced that his time in the Trump administration was officially over. Out of DOGE, out of government.

Musk said that the reason was that his limited 130-day stint as advisor was ending. But until that moment, he'd been saying that he still intended to work on DOGE part-time. "Well, DOGE is gonna continue, just as a way of life," he told us. "I will have some participation in that, but as I've said publicly, my focus has to be on the companies at this point."

Truth is, the Trump-Musk relationship had already seemed to be cooling. The president used to post about Musk about six times a week. But by April, he'd stopped mentioning Musk altogether.

Still, on Friday, they held a media event at the White House to confirm their mutual admiration—and to leave the door open for future collaboration. "Elon's really not leaving," Mr. Trump said. "He's gonna be back and forth, I think, I have a feeling."

Musk added, "The DOGE team is doing an incredible job. They're going to continue doing an incredible job, and I will continue to be visiting here and be a friend and advisor to the president."

Musk might be the first to admit that his DOGE experiment gave him a black eye—like the actual black eye he had on Friday, which he says he got from his five-year-old son ... or the matching one on that statue.

At least for now, Musk says that his focus will be running his business ventures: Tesla, Starlink, X, xAI, Neuralink, Optimus robots, the Boring Company, and SpaceX.

I asked, "Are all of your businesses related in some way?"

"I guess you can think of the businesses as things that improve the probable trajectory of civilization," Musk replied. "So you know, for making life multi-planetary or extending life to Mars, the idea there is to ensure the long-term survival of life and consciousness as we know it."

After our interview Tuesday, we were invited to witness the ninth launch of his Starship, the biggest rocket ever built. The two previous Starship tests ended in explosions – or, as SpaceX puts it, "rapid unscheduled disassemblies." So, all eyes were on Test Launch 9 to see if a Starship could return to Earth in one piece.

As Musk left our interview to watch the launch, he said something that could sum up all his enterprises: "I can't guarantee success, but I can guarantee excitement."

In the end, Elon Musk's giant rocket spun out of control. It did not survive re-entry.

For more info:

- SpaceX

- Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)