

# Elon Musk Decimated the Government and Saved Almost Nothing

By

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Elon Musk's cuts may have "saved" the public less than half a percent of the national debt, but they are already making Americans poorer and sicker and forcing them to spend hours waiting on phone help lines.

150 billion: that's the grand total of savings Elon Musk [revealed](#) last Thursday that he and his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) team are expecting to make after months of ruthless and [often mindless](#) cuts from a government the billionaire Trump megadonor claimed was riddled with fraud, waste, and graft.

To call this a monumentally unimpressive number doesn't do it justice. Musk's "savings" here — which are already error-ridden and [inflated](#) in the first place, created by totaling up spending that never actually existed or that was, alternately, either already cut or never actually was — represent just 15 percent of the trillion dollars he originally promised he would slash. It's a mere one-fiftieth of what the federal government spent just last year alone, would

shave off only one-tenth of one year's worth of the average federal deficit over the past decade, and is a whopping less than half a percent of the overall \$36.21 trillion of US national debt.

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In fact, government spending so far under Donald Trump has actually gone up compared to the last two years under Joe Biden. Three months of Musk feeding the US government through a woodchipper has done less than nothing about the ostensible problem it was meant to solve.

That doesn't mean it hasn't had an impact though. The miniscule amount that Musk claims to have "saved" American taxpayers has proven incredibly destructive to the functioning of the US government and to the essential services millions of Americans depend on, including:

- More than 216,000 workers pushed out of their jobs.
- Major downsizing of the agency responsible for ensuring air travel is safe, in the middle of a spate of deadly plane crashes.
- The agency responsible for ensuring trillions of dollars of Social Security payments that keep the elderly and disabled out of poverty turned into a dysfunctional mess.
- National parks forced to close for more days, visitor centers and facilities permanently shuttered, and critical projects within them delayed under sudden understaffing.
- Programs that helped disabled Americans get the care, legal protections, and services they need to live their lives gutted.

- The country's chief watchdog for predatory white-collar crime eviscerated.
- Huge planned cuts to the US Postal Service that is often the only affordable and reliable provider of mail for rural areas, which will see its workforce culled and offices closed.
- Cybersecurity drastically undermined for the most sensitive private data of millions of veterans, some of them high-ranking US military officials.
- The vital work of making sure food, medicine, and medical devices are safe; of tracking and treating diseases and other health issues; and funding scientific research all delayed, made ineffective, or simply eliminated by mass firings and contract cancellations.
- Longer phone wait times, less incoming tax revenue, and future tax-filing chaos after a quarter of the Internal Revenue Service's staff is set to be laid off.
- People effectively sentenced to death after funding for global HIV prevention programs was ended.
- Programs for helping poor households afford to heat and repair their homes and improve children's literacy ended.
- Agencies devoted to enforcing worker protection laws, ensuring miners' health and safety, and identifying workplace safety problems made impotent.
- A planned mass deregulation effort that will see federal rules for everything from the number of staff caring for elderly people in nursing homes to protecting workers from ingesting harmful chemicals rolled back or simply unenforced.

Bear in mind, this is an incomplete list. We haven't even gotten to the DOGE cuts that eliminated the federal workers scrutinizing multiple of Musk's experimental products for safety issues, or the cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency and the firing of Department of Energy workers whose job it is to ensure the safe handling of nuclear materials, including warheads.

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All of this will make almost every American's life worse. It will make them poorer, sicker, have to spend more time on the phone trying to get help, and more unemployed, prone to injury, and at risk of identity theft and fraud.

Most absurd, all of it will happen for the sake of making a nearly nonexistent dent in government spending and national debt. In fact, the paltry sum Musk has saved will almost entirely be negated by next year's military budget alone, which Trump wants to total \$1 trillion, a little over \$100 billion more than the budget that Congress passed for this year. Musk will have effectively crippled the modern American state and ripped vital services away from ordinary Americans in order to pay for more waste at the Pentagon — an upward transfer of wealth, in other words, to rapacious military contractors who price gouge the US military and make weapons systems that don't work.

“Perverse” hardly seems to cover it. But that's because this has little to do with saving taxpayer money or rooting out waste and is instead all about an obsession with shrinking the government and selling its functions off to the highest private bidder.

