

Musk echoes rightwing conspiracy theories to defend social security cuts

Doge head makes unfounded claim that Democrats use fraud in programs such as Medicare to boost voting ranks

[Elon Musk](#) is claiming, without evidence, that [Democrats](#) have been using fraud in entitlements like [social security](#) and [Medicare](#) to attract immigrants and boost their voting ranks – language that also echoes racist rightwing conspiracy theories. The billionaire owner of Tesla and SpaceX and [Donald Trump's "first buddy"](#) has been trying to justify cuts to programs like social security, arguing that the fraud has cost the government up to \$200bn.

“This is why the [Democrats](#) are so upset about the situation,” Musk said on a podcast with the Republican senator Ted Cruz and radio host Ben Ferguson.

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“By using entitlements fraud, the Democrats have been able to attract and retain vast numbers of illegal immigrants and buy voters. Basically bring in 10, 20 million people who are beholden to the Democrats for government handouts and will vote overwhelmingly Democrat.”

Musk said that his so-called “department of government efficiency” (Doge) will “turn off fraudulent payments of entitlements” to “illegals”, as he listed off a long slate of government programs including social security, Medicare, unemployment, disability and small business loans.

He then voiced what sounded akin to the [“great replacement theory”](#), which has been taken on by rightwing extremists and describes the theory that people in the US, specifically those who are white, are being “replaced” by immigrants.

“If the Dems can bring in 200,000 illegals and get them legalized ... even without cheating, if you bring in illegals that are 10 [times] the voting differential in a swing

state, it will no longer be a swing state,” Musk said. “And the Dems will win all the swing states in a matter of time.”

Musk then warned of the “deep socialist state” that Democrats will achieve if they take over the federal government.

“They will further cement that by bringing in more aliens, so you can’t vote your way out of it,” he said.

Over the last few days, Musk’s Doge has started to zero in on social security – what Musk has called “the biggest Ponzi scheme of all time” – arguing that the agency has seen billions of dollars in fraud, though not necessarily from immigrants.

Musk has especially attached himself to an alleged list of dead people he says the agency is still giving money to. In a recent interview with Fox Business, Musk claimed that there were 20 million “dead people in the social security database”.

At least 10 employees with Doge have been specifically [tasked](#) with trying to find people in the US who are dead but still receive social security payments. Those with the agency, including the acting commissioner, Lee Dudek, have [said](#) the list Musk is referring to are people who don’t have date of deaths on their records and are not necessarily receiving benefits.

Musk has also made some other changes at the Social Security Administration (SSA), the agency that oversees social security. Like many other federal agencies, SSA is seeing cuts to its workforce. In February, the agency [said](#) that it was reducing its staffing target to 50,000, down from 57,000.

Under pressure from Musk, the SSA said that it will start [requiring](#) in-person identity checks for recipients. In the past, recipients who couldn’t verify their identity online could do so over the phone.

Different government agencies have released competing figures of how much the government has lost to fraud.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) [reported](#) last April that estimated fraud could be between \$233bn to \$521bn, though it notes that it accounts for pandemic-specific payments that could have led to a “higher-risk environment” for fraud. The

report that the White House's office of management and budget had found lower estimates of fraud, between \$4.4bn and \$7.31bn during the same time period. When it comes to social security, the agency [records](#) improper payments and has said that 0.3% of all payments have been inaccurate, largely due to mistakes or delays.

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The White House has been trying to balance Musk's desire for wide cuts to entitlements with reassurances that Americans won't see any cuts themselves. Last week, the White House released a [statement](#) reiterating: "The Trump administration will not cut Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid benefits."

"What kind of a person doesn't support eliminating waste, fraud and abuse in government spending that ultimately costs taxpayers more?" the statement read. Recent polling has shown that while more people in the US are on board with Musk's Doge than those who are not, more people in the US hold negative views of Musk himself. In a poll from [NBC News](#), while 46% of people in the US said they hold a positive view of Doge, only 39% said they have a positive view of Musk. Meanwhile, 51% of people in the US said they hold a negative view of him.