

Unmasked: Musks Secret DOGE Goon Squad—Who Are All Under 26 And Have Unformed Brains

Josh Fiallo

Photo Illustration by Thomas Levinson/The Daily Beast/Getty/Reddit/BestDelegate/X/Instagram

[Elon Musk](#)'s team of young DOGE disruptors have been unmasked, much to the ire of the billionaire and [other MAGA figures](#).

One is a 19-year-old college freshman and heir to a popcorn fortune. Another was hosting Model UN sessions in 2019 and a third was given money by his parents to [invest in stocks](#) while at his high school in Silicon Valley.

The world's richest man lashed out at an X account which suggested the six young men, who now have access the Treasury Department's payment system, among other things, should be "paid a visit" by FBI agents.

"You have committed a crime," Musk fired back at a comment from the account Monday, shortly before the post in question was removed for allegedly violating the platform's rules.

Musk appeared to soften his stance on the men being identified later Monday, writing it was "time to confess" that the "media reports saying that [@DOGE](#) has some of world's best software engineers are in fact true." But he was wrong—not all the group are even "software engineers." Three do not even have degrees. And one who does is trying to cash in on his new job by charging people to read his [Substack entry which boasts](#), "Why DOGE: Why I gave up a seven-figure salary to save America."

Time to confess:

Media reports saying that [@DOGE](#) has some of world's best software engineers are in fact true.

— Elon Musk (@elonmusk) [February 3, 2025](#)

Musk's team of youngsters, as first reported by [WIRED](#) on Sunday, is Akash Bobba, 21, a student at the University of California, Berkeley; Edward Coristine, 19, a student at Northeastern University in Boston; and Ethan Shaotran, 22, who [said](#) in September he was a senior at Harvard.

The ones who actually have degrees, or at least have left college, are: Luke Farritor, 23, who attended the University of Nebraska without graduating; Gautier Cole Killian, a 24-year-old who attended McGill University; and Gavin Klinger, a 25-year-old who attended Berkeley;

The group's relative lack of experience—especially no previous positions in government work—has Democrats crying foul they were granted access to sensitive records while remaining largely in the shadows, away from public scrutiny.

All six desperately tried to cover their digital tracks recently, almost all of them deleting LinkedIn profiles, X accounts and even Facebook.

The 'Seven-Figure' Matt Gaetz Groupie

Gavin Kliger / substack.com/@weeklybyte

Gavin Kliger's LinkedIn lists his employer as the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, where he is a "Special Advisor to the Director." His old jobs include a brief stint as an engineer at Twitter in 2019

and, most recently, as a senior software engineer at Databricks, a cloud software company, for five years—which, he claims, gave him a seven-figure salary.

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Kliger is already making a name for himself in his new role. He was named Monday by [The New York Times](#) as the person who blasted out a staff-wide email to USAID workers that ordered them to work from home as the agency is scrutinized by DOGE and the Trump Administration—a correspondence that underscores just how much power Musk's team of young engineers may hold.

But what Kliger really wants the world to know about is his belief in male MAGA warriors Matt Gaetz and Pete Hegseth's brilliance, using his Substack to post about them both. Gaetz, who was investigated over allegations of teenage sex trafficking, was, according to Kliger, a victim of "the deep state." Hegseth, a serially unfaithful former Fox News star accused of sexual assault, drunkenness, and

receiving lap dances while in uniform, was, he wrote “the warrior Washington doesn’t want but desperately need.”

Kliger, whose Cornell graduate father is an attorney for Experian, appears happy to monetize his DOGE experience: he has made the entry about DOGE on his Substack for \$12-a-month subscribers only.

The Start-Up Scheduler

Ethan Shaotran / X/eshaotran

Shaotran penned an essay for [*Business Insider*](#) last summer where he detailed how he “balances his startup with full-time studies.” He is the founder of [Energize AI](#), a scheduling assistant for professionals that was awarded a \$100,000 grant from OpenAI in 2023.

He said last year that he was a senior at Harvard University. Prior to that, he [graduated in 2020](#) from Gunn High School in Palo Alto, California.

An online profile says he was “working on autonomous vehicles” in Harvard University’s Edge Computing Lab—perhaps where he caught the eye of Musk, who is obsessed with developing self-driving vehicles at Tesla.

The Dropout Who Reads Roman Scrolls

Farritor, meanwhile, was a co-winner of a \$700,000 prize last year after he used AI to partially decipher a 2,000-year-old charred papyrus scroll from Pompeii—part of the Vesuvius scrolls—that had stumped scientists for centuries.

Luke Farritor. / X/@TechBroDrip

Farritor interned for Musk's SpaceX prior to winning the challenge. He told [The Free Press](#) he dropped out of college to begin working for the Silicon Valley entrepreneur Nat Friedman, the former CEO of GitHub and Xamarin.

His dad, Shane Farritor, is a [mechanical engineering professor](#) who joined the University of Nebraska in 1998.

The Popcorn Heir Shaking Up D.C.

Coristine, the group's lone teenager, has a résumé that includes a summer internship at Neuralink, Musk's brain-computer interface company. Online sleuths unearthed that his father appears to be Charles Coristine—the businessman who purchased the once-failing snack company LesserEvil in 2011 and has turned it around to reportedly [rake in over \\$100 million a year](#).

Edward Coristine, / Reddit

WIRED reported that Coristine is listed in internal Office of Personnel Management records as being an “expert,” so the scope of his work within DOGE is particularly vague. Sources told the website that Coristine “has appeared on calls where workers were made to go over code they had written and justify their jobs.”

The Model UN Organizer

Another so-called OPM “expert,” according to *WIRED*, is Bobba. His since-deleted LinkedIn said he was an investment engineering intern at the Bridgewater Associates hedge fund, with previous internships at both Meta and Palantir, which was founded by the Republican mega-donor Peter Thiel.

Akash Bobba / BestDelegate

A number of people sung Bobba's praises online after he was identified as a DOGE staffer, including one [X](#) user who posted in his defense Monday that he is "one of the smartest dudes I've ever met." But he has come a long way in a short time: In 2019, he was organizing the local model United Nations near his home in Princeton Junction, New Jersey. His father is a computing science academic.

He graduated from West Windsor Plainsboro High School, a public school, in 2021. He spoke at commencement and [submitted his remarks](#) to be highlighted. Back then, he urged his classmates to "appreciate the complexity in life."

“We live in an age where simplicity reigns supreme, where 30 second TikToks and 280-character tweets come to define our identities,” he said. “This increasing willingness to simplify even the most complex narratives into sensational tidbits, perpetuates misinformation and in the process divides the communities, families, and relationships we cherish. What’s the solution, you might ask? Seek discomfort.”

They’re In D.C.’s C-Suite

WIRED reported, citing sources, that Bobba, Cristine, Farritor, and Shaotran “all currently have working GSA emails and A-suite level clearance at the General Services Administration, which means that they work out of the agency’s top floor and have access to all physical spaces and IT systems.”

Cole Killian / Instagram/building21.ca

Killian, meanwhile, has an email directly with DOGE and is a reportedly a “volunteer.”

The website reported he graduated high school in 2019 and more recently worked as an engineer at Jump Trading, which specializes in algorithmic and high-frequency financial trades.

The MAGA world has been up in arms about the engineers being identified, which some have equated to doxxing.

TPUSA's Charlie Kirk was among those rushing to attack WIRED and defend the young engineers.

“Remember when Wired was focused on cutting-edge technology and how young college dropout founders could change the world?” he posted to X. “Not anymore. Now, they’re doxxing DOGE employees and whining that they are too “young” and ‘inexperienced’ to reform America’s government. America’s experienced expert class have led this country to ruin. Young geniuses with a startup mentality could save it.”

Remember when Wired was focused on cutting-edge technology and how young college dropout founders could change the world?

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America's... pic.twitter.com/rgm8k2du9D

— Charlie Kirk (@charliekirk11) [February 3, 2025](#)

The U.S. Attorney Edward R. Martin Jr. threw his support behind Musk on the matter, writing to him Monday he would “pursue any and all legal action against anyone who impedes your work or threatens your people.”

There have been a flurry of threats against the young DOGE engineers online. Musk reshared a post on X that included screenshots of [nasty Reddit comments](#) that included one calling for the men to be shot.

DOGE has seemingly grown in power by the day. The department, created via an executive order on day one of Trump 2.0, was recently granted access to restricted parts of the General Services Administration buildings and access to IT systems which houses sensitive information like addresses, contact info, and even social security numbers.

[@SenSchumer](#) on DOGE: "Before our very eyes an unelected shadow government is conducting a hostile takeover of the federal government...Donald Trump does not have the authority to erase an independent agency created by Congress nor can the Department of State absorb USAID..." pic.twitter.com/HiUqndKMet

— CSPAN (@cspan) [February 3, 2025](#)

Chuck Schumer is among the politicians on the left who have criticized DOGE, with his most recent remarks coming on Monday.

“Before our very eyes, an unelected shadow government is conducting a hostile takeover of the federal government,” he said, adding that DOGE gaining access to sensitive info is “like letting a tiger into the petting zoo and hoping for the best.”

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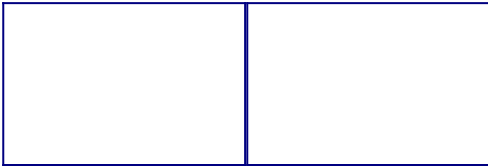
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Andrew Dorn

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Should you expect a check from Elon Musk's DOGE cuts?

([NewsNation](#)) — President Donald Trump wants to take some of the savings that come from Elon Musk's [government efficiency push](#) and return it directly to taxpayers, but that doesn't mean you should expect a check in the mail anytime soon.

Trump recently endorsed the idea — which started on social media — of sending 20% of the [Department of Government Efficiency's](#) savings back to taxpayers as a “DOGE dividend.”

“I love it. A 20% dividend, so to speak, for the money that we're saving by going after the waste and fraud and abuse and all of the other things that are happening,” Trump [told reporters](#) last week.

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When asked how much money it could be, Trump said, “It could be a lot. If it's 20%, we'd give back a lot of money to the taxpayer.”

[‘DOGE dividend’ advisor says \\$5k checks are ‘reasonable’](#)

Musk also supports the idea, likening so-called “DOGE dividend checks” to the “spoils of battle” [in a recent interview](#).

But that doesn’t mean dividend checks are going to happen. Congress would have to authorize the plan, and so far, even Republican lawmakers have been hesitant to embrace it.

It’s also unclear how much money DOGE can save to return to taxpayers in the first place. Clear evidence of major savings [has been scant](#), and budget experts doubt DOGE can reach its [\\$2 trillion savings goal](#) on its own.

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“I don’t think Americans should bet on a big DOGE dividend coming their way,” said Romina Boccia, the director of budget and entitlement policy at the libertarian Cato Institute.

Boccia added: “Politicians love to provide benefits to their constituents, but when it comes to actually curtailing spending and producing deficit reduction, that is much harder to do.”

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What is the 'DOGE dividend' check?

The idea for a "DOGE dividend" surfaced on social media last week when ["anti-woke" investor James Fishback](#) [posted a four-page proposal](#) and tagged Elon Musk.

Fishback suggested sending a "tax refund check" as a form of "restitution" that would go out to roughly "79 million tax-paying households."

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Those households would receive a \$5,000 check — a 20% cut of DOGE's \$2 trillion in targeted savings, according to Fishback's formulation.

The idea caught the attention of Musk, who said he would run it by Trump, and the president has since expressed support for the proposal.

Congress would have to approve the checks, and achieving the sort of payout that Fishback proposed would require Musk to hit his target of \$2 trillion in spending cuts — a number that has [drawn skepticism](#).

[DOGE claims it has saved billions, but nearly 75% unaccounted for](#)

"I think that 2 trillion is likely an overly ambitious target that DOGE by itself will not be able to accomplish," Boccia said.

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Achieving that level of savings, Boccia said, would require congressional buy-in and cuts to major entitlement programs like Social Security and Medicare, which Trump has already taken off the table.

DOGE claims it has saved an [estimated \\$65 billion](#) so far, citing a combination of fraud detection, canceled contracts, workforce reductions and other alleged cost-cutting measures.

However, several analyses have cast doubt on DOGE's numbers, identifying errors that caused savings to be vastly overstated. A New York Times [report found](#) that the single biggest line item on the DOGE website was off by about \$8 billion.

"At the moment, we cannot take DOGE at face value," Boccia said.

Fishback [told NewsNation's Chris Cuomo](#) that his plan would help DOGE reach its \$2 trillion goal because citizens would be incentivized to report wasteful spending.

"Every American can step up, report fraud and abuse to DOGE directly via X, and we'll see the savings go up, hit \$2 trillion, and we'll see the checks dispersed next summer," Fishback said.

Who would get DOGE dividend checks?

In his proposal, Fishback said the checks would only go to households that pay income taxes, meaning tens of millions of lower-income Americans would miss out.

An estimated 72.5 million households — roughly 40% — didn't pay federal income tax in 2022, according to an analysis by the [Tax Policy Center](#).

For the most part, people don't pay income taxes because they have little income. About 60% of nonpayers make less than \$30,000, and another 28% make between \$30,000 and about \$60,000, per the Tax Policy Center.

[Is Elon Musk right about widespread Social Security fraud?](#)

“While some politicians imply that people somehow are cheating the system by not paying taxes, the reality is quite different. People generally don't pay federal income tax because, well, they don't make very much money,” Howard Gleckman, a senior fellow at the Tax Policy Center, wrote in the report.

Of those who paid no federal income tax in 2022, roughly a third were aged 65 or older. That means many people who are primarily living on Social Security benefits wouldn't receive DOGE dividend checks under the current plan.

Are DOGE dividend checks a good idea?

Some experts think DOGE dividend checks would worsen inflation, like when COVID-era stimulus checks helped [drive up prices](#).

“Love what DOGE is doing, but this is a bad idea. There's no need to send 'dividend checks,’” Preston Brashers, a tax policy research fellow at the conservative Heritage Foundation, [wrote on X](#).

“If the government sends out stimmy checks, inflation will come back with a vengeance,” Brashers warned.

Fishback argues that DOGE dividend checks would not be inflationary because “unlike COVID-stimulus checks which were deficit-financed,” the new round of checks would be “exclusively funded with DOGE-driven savings.”

[Could Trump really return DOGE savings to taxpayers?](#)

Kevin Hassett, director of the White House's National Economic Council, echoed that claim, insisting that the dividend checks would not be inflationary [during a press briefing](#) last week.

“Imagine if we don't spend government money, and we give it back to people. If they spend it all, then you're even,” Hassett said.

Boccia said a DOGE dividend could push up inflation if the government were to borrow and fund the checks based on expected savings rather than savings that have actually materialized.

Others don't think the checks will be sizeable enough to matter.

“I can’t imagine they’d be inflationary because I can’t imagine they’d be big enough,” Elaine Kamarck, senior fellow in governance studies at the Brookings Institution, [told The Associated Press](#).

Kamarck dismissed the DOGE dividend as “ridiculous” and said there’s not enough money to cut that would result in a big contribution to taxpayers.

What do lawmakers think about the idea?

A DOGE dividend check would have to be approved by Congress, and even Trump-aligned GOP lawmakers seem skeptical.

House Speaker Mike Johnson appeared less than enthusiastic when [asked about the idea](#) at the Conservative Political Action Conference last week.

“Politically, that would be great for us, you know, you can send everybody a check,” Johnson said. “But if you think about our core principles, right, fiscal responsibility is what we do as conservatives. That’s our brand.”

[Speaker Johnson discourages DOGE stimulus checks idea](#)

Johnson added, “We have a \$36 trillion federal debt. We have a giant deficit that we’re contending with. I think we need to pay down the credit card, right?”

Senator Ron Johnson, R-Wisc., said he loves what Musk is doing to expose waste, fraud and abuse but pumped the breaks on a DOGE dividend.

“I’m always happy to let the American people keep more of their hard-earned money, but DOGE savings should first go toward reducing spending so that inflation doesn’t become the silent tax robbing them of their purchasing power,” Johnson [wrote on X](#).

Senator Ted Cruz, R-Texas, said he’d “want to see the details” of the plan, [according to Business Insider](#).

Wyoming Senator Cynthia Lummis, a Republican, [told Scripps News](#) that eliminating the debt and curbing inflation would be her main priorities for any savings associated with DOGE.