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Questions, Concerns over DOGE, Musk Access at DOL

Washington, DC (WorkersCompensation.com) – Amid lawsuits and firings, labor unions and others are raising questions and concerns over Elon Musk's, and his Department of Government Efficiency's (DOGE), access to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) files and databases.

Earlier this month a coalition of unions, the AFL-CIO, an economic think tank and other organizations filed suit against DOGE to limit access to the confidential worker information in the DOL's databases. Arguing DOGE is not an official government office because it was not created by Congress, the group said Musk and DOGE's actions were an illegal break of citizen's confidentiality and privacy.

On Feb. 7, a federal judge ruled that the unions and others lacked standing.

“(An) organization must point to a particular member and establish she would have standing if she were a plaintiff herself,” Bates wrote. “When seeking preliminary relief, this requires a submission on the record showing at least one particular member is substantially likely to suffer an injury at the hands of the defendant. ... It's not enough that three of plaintiffs' general counsels submitted declarations that plaintiffs' members will be harmed.”

But Bates did state that he has concerns about DOGE and Musk's alleged conduct. He also told the government's attorneys that they were asking him to have “a great deal of confidence in people who, according to public reports, are very young, who have never been in the federal government, who have never had any training with respect to the hands of confidential information... (You) are asking me to just put absolute confidence in the fact that nothing will happen.”

The coalition said OSHA is among the agencies DOGE is targeting for access. OSHA's database includes whistleblower information. Others, like the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Wage and Hour Division and the Federal Employees Compensation Act Claims Administration also hold sensitive worker information, they said.

AFL-CIO President Liz Schuler said the unions will press forward.

“The AFL-CIO, our affiliated unions, partners and allies will provide further evidence of standing and renew our efforts to block DOGE from accessing sensitive data at DOL and through our government, continuing the fight for transparency, accountability and the protection of the fundamental rights generations of workers fought to enact,” she said in a press release.

There is also concern over what the DOGE purge of government employees and inspectors general will mean for the many investigations into Musk's companies.

On Jan. 24, President Donald Trump fired about 17 independent inspectors general across government agencies. The firings started that night and were effective immediately. The move effectively removes oversight from Trump's administration without warning. By law, the White House is supposed to give Congress 30 days-notice if it intends to fire an inspector general, along with the reasons why the inspectors were fired.

Trump told reporters on Air Force One on Jan. 25, that the firings were a very common thing to do and that he would be replacing the inspectors with “good people in there that will be very good.”

Critics wonder what that will mean for Musk's companies, many of which are being investigated at the federal level.

environmental violations.

Musk’s companies currently have an estimated \$3 billion in contracts with the U.S. government, Casar said, meaning Musk will receive an average of \$8 million a day.

The animosity between Musk and the federal government seems to go both ways. In recent years, SpaceX has sued the National Labor Relations Board claiming the agency is unconstitutional after the NLRB issued a complaint against the company for firing eight employees who criticized Musk in an open letter.

The DOL’s OSHA has repeatedly fined Musk’s companies for serious safety violations including an incident at SpaceX where a worker fell to his death from a truck whose cargo has not been secured. Another complaint was filed against the company when an employee was injured during a rocket test. OSHA has also fined Tesla for exposing workers to hazardous chemicals, and for multiple violations at another of Musk’s companies, the Boring Company, involving chemical burns and other worker injuries.

David Michaels, a professor at the George Washington University’s School of Public Health said there were concerns about what information the DOGE employees would have access to. Michaels, who was head of OSHA under President Barack Obama said in addition to the conflict of interest giving Musk access to the files presents, those files contain confidential information provided by workers across the country. Opening access to the files could discourage workers from filing future complaints, either about Musk’s companies, or other companies.

On Thursday, the coalition of unions amended their lawsuit to protect the information at the DOL, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. The lawsuit expands the initial challenge to DOGE’s attempt to access information. The labor groups said they would continue to fight DOGE’s efforts.

“Elon Musk and DOGE continue to jeopardize Americans’ most sensitive, personal data, and threaten our health, safety, rights, paychecks, and the essential services we depend on,” the AFL-CIO’s Shuler said in a statement. “Unions and allies will vigorously fight DOGE’s attempt to put working people at risk through reckless actions that endanger workers and our families. They must be stopped—and today we’re getting back in court to do just that.”

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Liz Carey has worked as a writer, reporter and editor for nearly 25 years. First, as an investigative reporter for Gannett and later as the Vice President of a local Chamber of Commerce, Carey has covered everything from local government to the statehouse to the aerospace industry. Her work as a reporter, as well as her work in the community, have led her to become an advocate for the working poor, as well as the small business owner.

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