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Exclusive: Tesla's Musk meets top Biden officials on EVs in Washington

By Nandita Bose, David Shepardson and Raphael Satter



Tesla CEO Elon Musk and his security detail depart the company's local office in Washington, U.S. January 27, 2023. REUTERS/Jonathan Ernst



WASHINGTON, Jan 27 (Reuters) - Tesla (TSLA.O) Chief Executive Elon Musk met two top White House officials on Friday in Washington to discuss how the car maker and Democratic President Joe Biden could work together to advance electric vehicle production and speed electrification of U.S. vehicle networks.

Musk met John Podesta, a Democratic stalwart who serves as Biden's senior adviser for clean energy innovation, and Mitch Landrieu, who oversees infrastructure spending, the White House said. The billionaire and Biden have often been at odds over political and labor issues.

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"John Podesta and Mitch Landrieu met with Elon Musk to discuss shared goals around electrification and how the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act can advance electric vehicle production and charging as well as the broader cause of electrification," a White House spokesperson told Reuters.

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Musk responded on Twitter to the initial exclusive Reuters report that he met with the officials, saying it was "True."

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Later, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre confirmed the meeting

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"I think it's important that his (Biden's) team and senior members of his team had a meeting with Elon Musk today to do just that."

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A Reuters witness on Friday saw Podesta, Landrieu and Musk entering a downtown building that houses both Tesla's Washington lobbying operation and the Center for American Progress, a think tank Podesta founded. Landrieu and Podesta left about half an hour later and did not answer questions.

Musk left about 45 minutes after Podesta and Landrieu. He too ignored questions from a Reuters reporter.

Musk also met on Friday with Republican Representatives James Comer and Jim Jordan, the chairs of the House Judiciary and Oversight Committees. On Thursday, he met with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and briefly greeted

Musk called Biden "a damp sock puppet in human form" last year after Biden highlighted EV production by GM and Ford in a tweet but left out Tesla.

Biden only publicly acknowledged the role of Tesla in U.S. electric vehicle manufacturing over a year after taking office, after Musk <u>repeatedly complained</u> about being ignored.

In June, Biden compared Tesla unfavorably to Ford and sarcastically wished Musk "lots of luck" on his "trip to the moon" after the billionaire expressed reservations about the economy.

Still, Musk has long-standing important relationships with the U.S. government, and those have continued under the Biden administration.

Tesla has benefited from tax subsidies given to buyers of its electric vehicles while SpaceX, Musk's rocket company, has contracts worth billions of dollars to deliver astronauts and cargo to and from the International Space Station, and to build a moon lander.

U.S. consumers who bought Teslas became eligible again this month for up to \$7,500 in consumer tax credits, under the \$430 billion U.S. Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) passed last August. An earlier tax credit for Tesla buyers expired after the automaker sold its first 200,000 vehicles in the United States.

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who are eligible for the credits.

The law also sets new battery sourcing restrictions expected to take effect in March. It also includes new U.S. battery production credits that Musk said earlier this week could have significant benefits to the company.

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