



Top Social Security official steps down after clash with DOGE, sources say

Commissioner Michelle King had served over 30 years with the agency.

By [Rachel Scott](#), [Will Steakin](#), [Katherine Faulders](#), and [Molly Nagle](#)
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Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk arrives to the inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump in the Rotunda of the Capitol in Washington, DC, Jan. 20, 2025.
Chip Somodevilla/via Reuters

The top official at the Social Security Administration stepped down after a clash with DOGE employees over access to sensitive personal records, two sources told ABC News.

Michelle King, a career official who served at the agency for more than 30 years, was serving as acting commissioner of the Social Security Administration but left the agency after she was replaced with Leland Dudek this weekend.

Sources said that DOGE employees were seeking access to an internal data system which includes sensitive, personal information of Americans.

Nancy Altman, the president of Social Security Works, which works to expand social security, told ABC News the data the Social Security Administration has is expansive.

"It's your entire earnings record. If you're a beneficiary, it's your benefits, it's the name of your spouse and when you got married and if you got divorced, and all kinds of information. And most sensitive, if you've applied for disability benefits, all of your medical records," said Altman.

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It's not clear if DOGE employees ultimately gained access to the system following the dispute with King.

An email message sent to all SSA staff from Dudek tonight said he was "humbled and honored to lead this agency" until Trump's pick to lead Social Security, Frank Bisignano, is confirmed by the Senate.



Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk arrives to the inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump in the Rotunda of the Capitol in Washington, DC, Jan. 20, 2025.
Chip Somodevilla/via Reuters

"I will lead this agency in an open and transparent manner. My first call as Acting Commissioner was to our Inspector General's office to provide them an opportunity to oversee and review any and all agency activities, including my actions past, present, and future. Transparency is at the heart of good government," Dudek wrote in the email.

When asked for comment, White House Deputy Press Secretary Harrison Fields reiterated the White House's expectation that Bisignano will be confirmed in the coming weeks.

"In the meantime, the agency will be led by a career Social Security anti-fraud expert as the acting commissioner. President Trump is committed to appointing the best and most qualified individuals who are dedicated to working on behalf of the American people, not to appease the bureaucracy that has failed them for far too long," Fields said in a statement.

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In an interview with Fox News, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said President Donald Trump had dispatched Musk and DOGE to identify fraud at the Social Security Administration.

"And so their goal in going into the Social Security Administration is to identify three things. Number one, to identify duplicate payments and to end them. Number two, to identify payments that are going to deceased people who are no longer living and should no longer be receiving that money. And number three, to protect the integrity of the system for hard working Americans who have been paying into it their entire lives," Leavitt said.

"So rest assured to all of the people watching your show tonight, if you paid into the system honestly, you will continue to receive your Social Security checks," Leavitt added.

The Washington Post was the first to report King's departure.

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