



Elon Musk's DOGE asks for access to IRS taxpayer data, sources say

If granted, DOGE would have personal financial details on millions of Americans.

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Elon Musk speaks during an event in the Oval Office with President Donald Trump at the White House, Feb. 11, 2025, in Washington.
Alex Brandon/AP

Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency is pushing for access to an Internal Revenue Service system that retains the personal tax information of millions of Americans for the ostensible reason of rooting out fraud, according to several sources familiar with the effort.

The move has rattled agency insiders and privacy experts who warn that granting political operatives access to such private information could be extraordinarily dangerous.

The system, known as the Integrated Data Retrieval System, is used by IRS employees to review a person's tax information, issue notices and update taxpayer records. The database includes such private information as a person's Social Security number and address, as well as details on how much they earn, how much money they owe, properties and even details related to child custody agreements.

Access to the files, which is tightly controlled within the agency, had not been granted as of this weekend, several sources told ABC News.

"Waste, fraud, and abuse have been deeply entrenched in our broken system for far too long. It takes direct access to the system to identify and fix it," White House spokesperson Harrison Fields told reporters late Sunday.

"DOGE will continue to shine a light on the fraud they uncover as the American people deserve to know what their government has been spending their hard earned tax dollars on," he added.

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A sign for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is seen on its building on Feb. 13, 2025, in Washington, DC.
Kayla Bartkowski/Getty Images

The White House has not said how exactly it would use the system to look for fraud and if it would take steps to protect Americans from being targeted for political reasons. Musk, estimated to be the richest man in the world, has criticized federal judges for curbing his power and called for their impeachment. Musk also has alleged without evidence or examples of wrongdoing that federal workers were defrauding taxpayers.

"We do find it rather odd that there are quite a few people in the bureaucracy who have ostensibly a salary of a few hundred thousand dollars, but somehow managed to accrue tens of millions of dollars in net worth while they are in that position," Musk told reporters on Feb. 12 while in the Oval Office with President Donald Trump. "We're just curious as to where it came from."

Earlier this month, DOGE employees demanded access to the Treasury Department's vast federal payment system responsible for managing trillions of dollars in government expenditures. That access triggered a lawsuit by 19 states and has been temporarily blocked by a federal judge.

Musk and the White House have not said what federal data the DOGE team has been able to get to, or what's been done with the data that's been acquired.

"People who share their most sensitive information with the federal government do so under the understanding that not only will it be used legally, but also handled securely and in ways that minimize risks like identity theft and personal invasion, which this reporting brings into serious question," said Elizabeth Laird, a former state privacy officer now with the Center for Democracy and Technology.

Sources say one DOGE staffer arrived at the IRS last Thursday seeking meetings with various offices about how the IRS collects and manages data and what each business unit within the IRS does.

The White House initially told reporters on Sunday that an unnamed IRS employee connected to DOGE had access to the system to identify "fraud and protect taxpayers." But a few minutes later, the administration walked that back, telling ABC News the employee was expected to seek access but doesn't have it yet.

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According to the [Washington Post](#), which first reported the development, the IRS is considering a memorandum of understanding that would give DOGE officials access to several systems, including IDRS.



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Alex Brandon/AP

When pressed last week by reporters on what checks are in place to ensure Musk -- whose companies have billions of dollars in current federal contracts -- is not accessing data to his advantage, the billionaire insisted that DOGE posts all of its activity on its website "so all of our actions are maximally transparent."

The DOGE site on Monday included a list of mostly canceled government contracts and a message on its "savings" tab: "Receipts coming over the weekend!"

According to one person familiar with DOGE's efforts, the team acquiring access to the IRS system would not allow them to change any data within it. But if granted, the access would allow unfettered access to access any person's tax filings.

According to an IRS rulebook for the system posted online, anyone accessing IDRS is specifically not allowed to review the personal tax information of relatives, friends, neighbors or celebrities.

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"IDRS users shall not access the account of any taxpayer or another IRS employee unless there is a business need and access has been formally authorized as part of the user's official duties," the agency rulebook stated.

The policy noted: "Willful unauthorized disclosure, access or inspection of non-computerized taxpayer records, including hard copies of returns - as well as computerized information - is a crime, punishable upon conviction, by fines, prison terms and termination of employment."

While a district court judge in Manhattan has temporarily blocked DOGE's access to the Treasury Department system for now, a separate ruling by another district court judge has allowed DOGE to access data at the Department of Labor, Department of Health and Human Services, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

ABC News' Rachel Scott and Hannah Demissie contributed to this report.

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