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People protest against Elon Musk outside the Treasury Department in Washington, Feb. 4, 2025. / AP

WASHINGTON—A mass protest, which grew in just over an hour from one hundred people to thousands stretching over three city blocks in downtown D.C., decried multibillionaire Elon Musk's takeover of the Department of the Treasury and his grabbing of the personal information of millions of Americans.

The demonstrators, organized by the Working Families Party and a host of other progressive groups, demanded the eviction of Musk and his team of Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) operatives from the U.S. Treasury Department where they were gathering personal data ranging from your telephone number and bank accounts to your Social Security payments and income taxes. No one in the country is free of the Trump-approved snooping by Musk and his legions of 20-something tech autocrats into their personal affairs.

To make matters worse the word is out that Musk's next takeover is planned for the U.S. Department of Labor where workers and the public will mass today to try to prevent him and his minions from gaining entrance and trying to end labor rights in America. The National Labor Relations Board, created by the Wagner Act in the 1930s under then-president Roosevelt has already been crippled and the end of the right to form unions is next on the hit list for the

richest man in the world. President Trump, backing him up, has declared that collective bargaining itself is “un-American.”

The demonstrators descending on government departments are expressing outrage that Republican President Donald Trump has given unlimited leeway to Musk and his team to grab the data held by these departments and use it any way he sees fit, both to further the Trump regime’s schemes to smash the rights of federal workers but also to line his own pockets.

Joined the outrage

A parade of Democratic lawmakers, including Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., joined the outrage at the Treasury Department last night. However, some of it was also directed at the U.S. Senate for sitting on its hands and sheepishly acceding to Trump and his handler, Musk.

Musk’s invasion is the biggest breach of personal data in U.S. history: \$6 trillion worth of people’s finances, affecting tens of millions of people in the U.S., if not all 330 million of us.

And Musk doesn’t have to tell you what he sees, what he’s looking for—or how he’ll use your data once he and his DOGE team grab it. No wonder a handwritten protest sign read “HANDS OFF MY DATA, YOU FASCISTS!” In caps.

The protesters in the street weren’t the only ones raising hell about Musk’s power grab, which amounts to a coup d’etat. The Service Employees (SEIU), the Government Employees (AFGE), and the labor-backed Alliance for Retired Americans all marched into the U.S. District Court in Boston, describing the abuses and seeking an immediate injunction to stop them.

If they can’t stop Musk, Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., warned at the protest: “We don’t have years. We don’t have months. We have days to stop the destruction of democracy.”

“Stop the coup!” was a common chant at the rally. “Whose money? Our money!” was another. “Deport Musk” one sign read. “Furlough Elon Musk, not civil servants,” another said.

And, in a summation of what the crowd of thousands thought and the speakers onstage said: “Democracy, not oligarchy!”

“We have to reach out to Democrats, Republicans, independents, conservatives, liberals, libertarians, vegetarians, and tell them we don’t have much time” to halt Musk’s takeover of everybody’s data and money as part of Trump’s latest coup try, said Murphy.

“We have got to tell Elon Musk that nobody elected his ass,” declared Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., at the evening demonstration. More than eight years ago before Trump’s first inaugural, Waters called for Trump’s impeachment due to his ties to the criminal corporate class.

But even though the lawmakers agreed with the crowd, some spectators—and the final keynote speaker, from

Indivisible—were skeptical Congress would act. “Shut the Senate!” to stop all action on anything Trump and Musk demand, was a frequent chant.

So was “Lock him up!” though it was unclear who chanters wanted to jail: Musk or Trump.

Speakers at the rally had some practical suggestions for putting pressure on Congress to stop Musk and Trump in their tracks. One was to flood the Capitol with phone calls, especially to Republicans, reminding them “This is your country, too,” as Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., put it.

Seemingly joined the coup

The catch to that plan, as another legislator ruefully said, is the congressional Republicans have seemingly joined the coup and the lockouts associated with it. They have shut down their phones and refused to answer the deluge of calls.

Speakers also advocated insider political maneuvering to hamstring Congress, and especially the Senate, from accomplishing anything at all.

Delays proposed included every Democrat casting votes against any and every Trump nominee, seeking constantly to see if quorums are present—that roll call usually takes at least 15 minutes—and objecting to “unanimous consent” requests on routine items, forcing endless debates. One crowd member kept yelling “Filibuster!”

After all, it’s to stop the coup, speakers contended. “DOGE means ‘Dangerous Oligarchs Grab Everything,’” Rep. Ayanna Pressley, D-Mass., a “squad” member, said.

Musk and his DOGE recruits—all described as around 22 years old with no experience or qualifications—tried to grab the Treasury’s electronic records of the data by strong-arming the head of its Bureau of Fiscal Services, the suit says.

He refused and Treasury Secretary Doug Bessent, a Trumpite, put the worker on leave for a month, “and granted DOGE-affiliated individuals full access to the Bureau’s data and the computer systems that house them.” Bessent didn’t announce, explain, or justify letting Musk and his team access all the files, much less follow the law that bans such digging, the unions’ suit says.

“Federal laws protect sensitive personal and financial information from improper disclosure and misuse, including by barring disclosure to individuals who lack a lawful and legitimate need for it,” the unions said in their lawsuit.

“Treasury Secretary [Scott] Bessent violated these restrictions.

“The scale of the intrusion into individuals’ privacy is massive and unprecedented,” the unions’ suit continues.

“Millions of people cannot avoid engaging in financial transactions with the federal government and, therefore, cannot avoid having their sensitive personal and financial information maintained in government records.

“Granting DOGE-affiliated individuals full, continuous, and ongoing access to that information for an unspecified time means retirees, taxpayers, federal employees, companies, and other individuals from all walks of life have no assurance their information will receive the protection federal [privacy] law affords.

“And because defendants’ actions and decisions are shrouded in secrecy, individuals will not have even basic information about what personal or financial information” Musk can grab and spread to whomever he pleases.

Should not be forced to share with Musk

“People who must share information with the federal government should not be forced to share information with Elon Musk or his “DOGE.” And federal law says they do not have to.”

The only way to enforce that law, the unions, the alliance, and their allies said in the suit, is for an immediate court injunction enforcing it and stopping Musk’s vacuum cleaner of all your data.

The mass disclosure Musk got and used for his DOGE angered SEIU President April Verrett, AFGE President Clarence Kelley, Alliance for Retired Americans Executive Director Richard Fiesta, and two public interest groups. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., blew a verbal gasket.

“We are outraged and alarmed that the Trump administration has allowed so-called DOGE staff to violate the law and access millions of older Americans’ sensitive personal and financial data,” said Fiesta. “Seniors are already the most vulnerable Americans to fraud and scams...We urge the court to quickly act to stop this unlawful theft of our data.”

“It is disgraceful the Trump administration allowed unelected billionaires and their lackeys unfettered access to the personal and financial information of Americans. Together, we can stop this violation of American citizens’ privacy,” said Kelley.

SEIU’s Verrett attached another motive to Trump’s and Musk’s data grab. It’s so alarming, she said, that it will distract everyone from the other part of the Trump agenda, another massive tax cut for billionaires and the corporate class.

It’ll also hurt “thousands of SEIU members who perform essential services for the government,” Verrett added. “As a candidate, Donald Trump claimed to stand for the working class, but as president, he is putting billionaires like Elon Musk ahead of working people.”

“The system makes sure your granddad gets his Social Security check. The system makes sure your mom’s doctor gets a Medicare payment to cover her appointment. And the system makes sure you get the tax refund you’re owed.” All has been taken over by Elon Musk,” Sen. Warren declared at the rally.

“Elon and his handful of friends now have full access to your personal and financial information that’s in the system...Elon now has the power to suck out all that information for his own use. Now, whether it’s to boost his

finances or expand his political power, it is all up to Elon.

“Donald Trump and his billionaire buddies are determined to take over this government to make it work better for themselves and worse for everyone else.

“And every organization from your state government that uses federal money on that bridge project to the local Head Start that takes care of little kids while their mommies and daddies go to work is now at the mercy of Elon Musk. Maybe you get paid, or maybe you don’t—because now it appears that all of us work for Elon Musk.

“Elon just grabbed the controls of that whole payment system, demanding the power to turn it on for his friends or turn it off for anyone he doesn’t like. One guy deciding who gets paid and who doesn’t. It is not the law, but it is the reality.”

John Wojcik contributed to this article.

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CONTRIBUTOR



Mark Gruenberg



Award-winning journalist Mark Gruenberg is head of the Washington, D.C., bureau of *People’s World*. He is also the editor of the union news service Press Associates Inc. (PAI). Known for his reporting skills, sharp wit, and voluminous knowledge of history, Mark is a compassionate interviewer but tough when going after big corporations and their billionaire owners.

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