



# Trump energy secretary allowed 23-year-old DOGE rep to access IT systems over objections from general counsel

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The US Department of Energy headquarters in Washington, DC. J. David Ake/Getty Images/File

**(CNN)** — A representative from Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency, or [DOGE](#), was granted access to the Energy Department’s IT system on Wednesday by Energy Secretary Chris Wright, two people with knowledge of the situation told CNN.

Wright granted access to DOGE representative Luke Farritor — a 23-year-old former SpaceX intern — even over objections from members of the department’s general counsel and chief information offices, the people told CNN. The DOE [chief information office](#) is the

department's IT and cybersecurity office.

Members of the general counsel and chief information offices “said this is a bad idea” because Farritor hadn’t had a standard background investigation needed to access the department’s system, one of the people told CNN. “He’s not cleared to be in DOE, on our systems. None of those things have been done.”

Farritor was granted access to basic IT including email and Microsoft 365, one of the people said. The chief information office only does a small amount of IT and cybersecurity work for the National Nuclear Security Administration, they said, including providing connectivity and running basic internet services for NNSA’s headquarters. It does not run IT systems for the nuclear agency’s labs controlling the nation’s nuclear stockpile.

On Friday, department leadership installed a different SpaceX engineer, Ryan Riedel, as chief information officer, three people familiar with the matter told CNN — the department’s top IT official charged with managing tech acquisitions and protecting personnel data across a vast bureaucracy.

Riedel spent four years at SpaceX as a network security engineer, according to his LinkedIn profile. Before that, he spent several years in various tech roles at the Army and Navy, according to the profile.



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An Energy Department spokesperson did not return a request for comment. CNN has also reached out to SpaceX for comment.



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In addition to DOGE presence in the building, Energy Department employees — including the National Nuclear Security Administration — have received the so-called buyout emails that employees in many other agencies have been receiving. The “buyouts” generally allow employees to leave their jobs but be paid through the end of September. NNSA being included in the “buyout” wave is significant because it manufactures and maintains the

nation's nuclear stockpile and does other critical national security work.

Energy Department employees working at the department under a year have received emails they've been deemed to be on probationary status and warned they could be fired immediately. These types of emails have gone out to over 1,000 employees at the Environmental Protection Agency as well.

There are at least 1,000 DOE staff working in relatively new offices in the department created after Biden's infrastructure and climate laws passed a few years ago, including the Grid Deployment Office – which works on modernizing and securing the nation's electrical grid.

CNN previously reported 60 Energy Department employees were placed on administrative leave earlier this week due to their work on issues deemed to be involved with diversity, equity and inclusion.

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