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# Metadata on U.S. government memos reveals authors linked to Project 2025

The information has reportedly since been scrubbed from the documents.  
By [Amanda Yeo](#) on January 29, 2025

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Credit: Sarah Silbiger for The Washington Post via Getty Images

The [U.S. Office of Personnel Management \(OPM\)](#) has reportedly rushed to wipe the metadata from some of its [memos](#) after the embedded information indicated that they were written by people associated with [Project 2025](#). While many members of [President Donald Trump's](#) administration [have links to The Heritage Foundation's controversial movement](#), questions have been raised regarding whether some of these authors are even part of the OPM.

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[Spotted by Reddit user r/AdeptGreen](#), several memos issued by the OPM since Trump's inauguration have had metadata showing them to be written by people linked to Project 2025. Metadata is information about another set of information, such as its author, the date it was created, and the file's size. It is frequently embedded within the file.

For example, the OPM states that Jan. 22 memo [Guidance on Presidential Memorandum Return to In-Person Work](#) is from its Acting Director Charles Ezell. However, the document's metadata indicates that it was actually created by [Noah Peters, an attorney linked to Project 2025](#). Mashable downloaded the memo on Tuesday prior to its alteration, and was able to view the original metadata.

While Peters' name was in the metadata of some OPM memos, others were apparently penned by [James Sherk](#), who Trump has announced will serve on the White House Domestic Policy Council. He has also been linked to Project 2025, [previously working for The Heritage Foundation for over a decade](#). According to the metadata, Sherk authored two joint memos with the OPM and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

While the OPM has [reportedly removed the metadata](#) and reuploaded its memos, Mashable was unable to access them at all at time of writing on Wednesday, the links to each one now failing to load. Tech researcher Molly White has [archived the original documents](#).

It's common practice for managers to have employees draft documents which they subsequently sign off on. However, it's much less common for people to write memos for departments that they aren't a part of. Though [Peters' LinkedIn page](#) now lists him as a full-time Senior Advisor at OPM, Mashable was unable to find any information suggesting Sherk has any role with either this department or the OMB.

Peters' and Sherk's apparent work on the OPM's memos appear to be the product of Trump's increasing [politicisation of the federal workforce](#). Last week Trump issued an [executive order reinstating Schedule F](#), a policy from his first term which reclassified thousands of federal workers as political appointees. This reclassification granted Trump's administration the authority to hire, dismiss, or otherwise manage people in these roles — including installing workers who adhere to the president's politics.

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Such consolidation of power was also a goal for Project 2025, which [stated in its policy agenda](#) that a conservative U.S president must have the "boldness to bend or break the bureaucracy to the presidential will."

Regardless of its appropriateness, it wouldn't be shocking to see more federal documents with surprising authors in the future — especially considering [Trump's plans to shrink the U.S. government](#). Almost all federal employees were [offered buyouts on Tuesday](#), with promises of around eight months of wages on the condition that they voluntarily leave their jobs by Feb. 6. [Over two million workers](#) reportedly received the offer.

Though the Trump administration likely doesn't expect everyone to accept its offer, doing so looks like a smart move right now. Trump has made no secret of his intent to eliminate millions of government jobs via the [newly-created, Elon Musk-led U.S. Department of Government Efficiency \(DOGE\)](#). The organisation had been planned to be co-led by Vivek Ramaswamy, who previously expressed an intention to [reduce the federal workforce by 75 percent](#), including [firing one million people in 2025](#).

While [Ramaswamy is no longer involved with the project](#), DOGE's goal to execute drastic cuts amongst federal personnel appears to remain in place.

## What is Project 2025?

Organised by conservative think-tank The Heritage Foundation, Project 2025 is a political movement which aims to swiftly and decisively steer the U.S. toward the right.

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In its policy agenda "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise," Project 2025 lays out a lengthy set of proposals and plans for a right-wing U.S. administration, spanning over 900 pages. [These plans](#) include significantly downsizing the Department of Education, [criminalising pornography](#), eliminating gender-affirming healthcare, and abolishing federal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs.

Initially published in 2023, Project 2025's policy agenda has garnered the [condemnation of Democratic politicians](#) while becoming a guiding force for Republicans.

Trump previously distanced himself from Project 2025 in 2024, stating that he had "no idea who is behind it."

"I disagree with some of the things they're saying and some of the things they're saying are absolutely ridiculous and abysmal," [Trump wrote on his social media platform Truth Social last July](#). "Anything they do, I wish them luck, but I have nothing to do with them."

Even so, Trump's slew of [executive actions](#) since his inauguration have [closely mirrored Project 2025's wishlist](#). The president has also appointed individuals involved with the document to [key roles in his administration](#). Such appointees include Russell Vought, one of the authors of Project 2025's policy agenda and [Trump's pick to head the OBM](#) after having taken on the role during the president's first term. Vought was the previously quoted Project 2025 author who called for federal agencies to "bend or break" to Trump's demands.

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Amanda Yeo is an Assistant Editor at Mashable, covering entertainment, culture, tech, science, and social good. Based in Australia, she writes about everything from video games and K-pop to movies and gadgets.

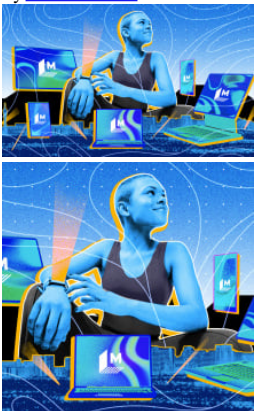
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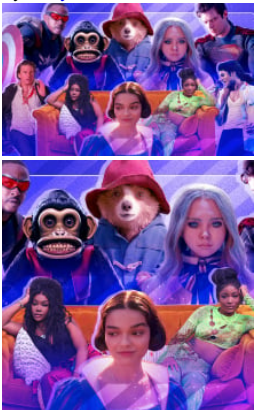


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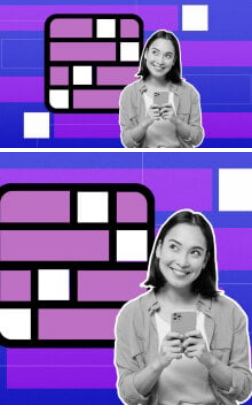


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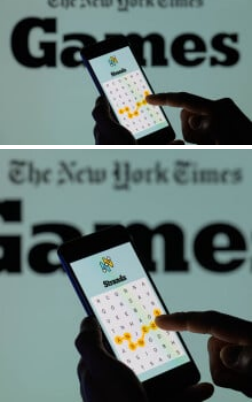


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