



U.S. NEWS

## 19 states sue to stop DOGE from accessing Americans' personal data



1 of 3 | Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump, left, claps as Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk prepares to depart after speaking at a campaign event at the Butler Farm Show, on Oct. 5, 2024, in Butler, Pa. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon, File)

BY ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE

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Nineteen Democratic attorneys general sued President [Donald Trump](#) on Friday to stop [Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency](#) from accessing Treasury Department records that contain sensitive personal data such as Social Security and bank account numbers for millions of Americans.

[The case](#), filed in federal court in New York City, alleges the Trump administration allowed Musk's team access to the Treasury Department's central payment system in violation of federal law.

The payment system handles tax refunds, Social Security benefits, veterans' benefits and much more, sending out trillions of dollars every year while containing an expansive network of Americans' personal and financial data.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, also known as DOGE, [was created](#) to discover and eliminate what the Trump administration has deemed to be wasteful government spending. DOGE's access to Treasury records, as well as its inspection of various government agencies, has ignited widespread concern among critics over the increasing power of Musk, while supporters have cheered at the idea of reining in bloated government finances.

Musk has made fun of criticism of DOGE on his X social media platform while saying it is saving taxpayers millions of dollars.

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[New York Attorney General Letitia James](#), whose office filed the lawsuit, said DOGE's access to the Treasury Department's data raises security problems and the possibility for an illegal freeze in federal funds.

"This unelected group, led by the world's richest man, is not authorized to have this information, and they explicitly sought this unauthorized access to illegally block payments that millions of Americans rely on, payments for health care, child care and other essential programs," James said in a video message released by her office.

James, a Democrat who has been one of Trump's chief antagonists, said the president does not have the power to give away American's private information to anyone he chooses, and he cannot cut federal payments approved by Congress.

Also on the lawsuit are Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

The suit alleges that DOGE's access to the Treasury records could interfere with funding already appropriated by Congress, which would exceed the Treasury Department's statutory authority. The case also argues that the DOGE access violates federal administrative law and the U.S. Constitution's separation of powers doctrine.

It also accuses Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent of changing the department's longstanding policy for protecting sensitive personally identifiable information and financial information to allow Musk's DOGE team access to its payment systems.

"This decision failed to account for legal obligations to protect such data and ignored the privacy expectations of federal fund recipients," including states, veterans, retirees, and taxpayers, the lawsuit says.

[Connecticut Attorney General William Tong](#) said it's not clear what DOGE is doing with the information in the Treasury systems.

"This is the largest data breach in American history," Tong said in a statement. "DOGE is an unlawfully constituted band of renegade tech bros combing through confidential records, sensitive data and critical payment systems. What could go wrong?"

The Treasury Department has said the review is about assessing the integrity of the system and that no changes are being made. According to two people familiar with the process, Musk's team began its inquiry [looking for ways](#) to suspend payments made by the U.S. Agency for International Development, which Trump and Musk are attempting to dismantle. The two people spoke with The Associated Press on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation.

Separately, Democratic lawmakers are [seeking a Treasury Department investigation](#) of DOGE's access to the government's payment system.

Also, labor unions and advocacy groups have sued to block the payments system review over concerns about its legality. A judge in Washington on Thursday temporarily restricted access to two employees with "read only" privileges.

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Associated Press writer Dave Collins in Hartford, Connecticut, contributed to this report.

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