

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 3, 2025

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

We are concerned that you have engaged in an unlawful firing spree that includes dozens of Senate-confirmed government officials. Many of the individuals you have targeted lead federal agencies and offices that are investigating or prosecuting companies belonging to Elon Musk, one of your top advisors, for violations of a wide swath of federal safety, labor, intelligence, and other rules and laws.¹ The firings of these officials threaten our democratic system of checks and balances and fail to hold Mr. Musk accountable for actions that may have hurt workers, endangered national security and citizens' and small businesses' data, ripped off taxpayers, damaged the environment, and broken federal election rules.

You have fired scores of Senate-confirmed government officials over the past three weeks, including many individuals who have legal protections dictating why and how they can be removed from office.² For example, federal law requires the president to notify Congress before removing an inspector general (IG) from office, but you did not do so before firing over a dozen IGs during your first week in office.³ You also failed to set forth the specific and substantive rationale for each IG's firing. Members of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) can be removed "for neglect of duty or malfeasance in office, but for no other cause," and you removed an NLRB member with no justification.⁴ These and other firings are illegal.

¹ The Guardian, "Trump's disregard for US constitution 'a blitzkrieg on the law', legal experts say," Steven Greenhouse, February 1, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/feb/01/trump-executive-orders-constitution-law>; The Lever, "Trump Purges Inspectors General Investigating Musk's Businesses," Katya Schwenk, Lucy Dean Stockton, and Veronica Riccobene, February 7, 2025, <https://www.levernews.com/trump-purges-inspectors-general-investigating-musks-businesses/>; The New York Times, "Elon Musk's Business Empire Scores Benefits Under Trump Shake-Up," Eric Lipton and Kirsten Grind, February 11, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/11/us/politics/elon-musk-companies-conflicts.html>.

² The New York Times, "Elon Musk's Business Empire Scores Benefits Under Trump Shake-Up," Eric Lipton and Kirsten Grind, February 11, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/11/us/politics/elon-musk-companies-conflicts.html>.

³ 5 U.S.C. 403(b); Politico, "Trump fires independent inspectors general in Friday night purge," Megan Messerly, Josh Gerstein, Kyle Cheney, and Nahal Toosi, January 25, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/01/25/donald-trump-inspectors-general-firing-00200611>.

⁴ 29 U.S.C. 153(a); CBS News, "Former National Labor Relations Board member who was fired by Trump speaks out," Jericka Duncan, Michael Kaplan, and Caitlin Yilek, February 7, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/former-national-labor-relations-board-member-who-was-fired-by-trump-speaks-out/>.

Nearly all of your decisions you made about who to fire appear to benefit Mr. Musk, and many target individuals and agencies that are currently investigating or prosecuting Mr. Musk or his companies for unlawful behavior.⁵ The fired individuals directly involved in pending or previous actions related to Mr. Musk and businesses include:⁶

- **NLRB Chair** Gwynne Wilcox. In January 2024, the NLRB charged Mr. Musk’s astronautics company SpaceX with engaging in unfair labor practices;⁷ the NLRB also currently has at least a dozen unfair labor practices cases open against Mr. Musk’s automotive company Tesla;⁸
- **FEC Chair** Ellen Weintraub. In 2024, the FEC adjudicated cases that alleged Mr. Musk may have violated campaign finance laws;⁹
- **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Commissioners** Jocelyn Samuels and Charlotte Burrows. In September 2023, the EEOC sued Tesla for racial harassment and retaliation;¹⁰
- **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) IG** Phyllis Fong. In December 2022, the USDA IG investigated potential animal welfare violations at Musk’s brain implant company Neuralink;¹¹ and
- **U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) IG** Paul Martin. The USAID IG was inspecting the use of Starlink terminals to support Ukraine.¹²

You also fired three other IGs from agencies that were investigating or had punished Mr. Musk’s companies.

- **U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) IG** Eric Soskin. In January 2025, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, an agency under the DOT, opened an

⁵ The New York Times, “Elon Musk’s Business Empire Scores Benefits Under Trump Shake-Up,” Eric Lipton and Kirsten Grind, February 11, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/11/us/politics/elon-musk-companies-conflicts.html>.

⁶ The Lever, “Trump Purges Inspectors General Investigating Musk’s Businesses,” Katya Schwenk, Lucy Dean Stockton, and Veronica Riccobene, February 7, 2025, <https://www.levernews.com/trump-purges-inspectors-general-investigating-musks-businesses/>.

⁷ CNN, “SpaceX sues NLRB after Board consolidates nine complaints accusing the company of unfair labor practices,” Ramishah Maruf, January 4, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/04/business/spacex-hit-with-nlr-complaint-for-illegally-firing-employees-critical-of-elon-musk/index.html>.

⁸ National Labor Relations Board, “Case Search,” February 13, 2025, [https://www.nlr.gov/search/case/tesla?s\[0\]=Open](https://www.nlr.gov/search/case/tesla?s[0]=Open).

⁹ Public Citizen, “Elon Musk May Have Violated Campaign Finance Law – Complaint to FEC,” Craig Holman, October 23, 2024, <https://www.citizen.org/article/elon-musk-violated-campaign-finance-law-complaint-to-fec/>.

¹⁰ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, “EEOC Sues Tesla for Racial Harassment and Retaliation,” press release, September 28, 2023, <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-tesla-racial-harassment-and-retaliation>.

¹¹ The Washington Post, “Musk’s brain implant company reportedly investigated over animal deaths,” Jacob Bogage, December 6, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/12/06/elon-musk-neuralink-animal-creulity/>.

¹² USAID Office of Inspector General, “PROJECT ANNOUNCEMENT: Inspection of USAID’s Oversight of Starlink Terminals Provided to the Government of Ukraine,” May 14, 2024, <https://oig.usaid.gov/node/6814>; Los Angeles Times, “Column: Trump and Musk crippled our most important global aid agency. The consequences are grim,” Robin Abcarian, February 7, 2025, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2025-02-07/usa-id-elon-musk-donald-trump-foreign-aid-tesla-china-robin-abcarian>.

investigation into Tesla over safety concerns in its remote and self-driving vehicles,¹³ and in September 2024, the Federal Aviation Administration, which is also part of DOT, proposed fining SpaceX \$630,000 for failing to follow license requirements during rocket launches;¹⁴

- **U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) IG Robert Storch.** In December 2024, the DoD IG reportedly opened an investigation into repeated failures by Musk and SpaceX to disclose their meetings with foreign leaders;¹⁵ and
- **U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) IG Larry Turner.** The Occupational Health and Safety Administration, part of the DOL, “has opened probes into and fined SpaceX, Tesla and Boring Company for worker injuries or unsafe working conditions.”¹⁶

You have also fired numerous other agency leaders and IGs who would have provided a check on potential wrongdoing by Musk and his companies. These federal watchdogs could have held Musk and his associates accountable for future violations of the law. These individuals include:

- **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) IG Sean O’Donnell.** In 2019 and 2022, the EPA settled lawsuits with Tesla over *Clean Air Act* and hazardous waste law violations;¹⁷
- **U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) IG Mark Greenblatt.** DOI had reviewed Musk’s rocket launch facility Starbase;¹⁸
- **U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE) Director David Huitema.** OGE is an independent agency responsive for preventing conflicts of interest among federal officers and employees;¹⁹
- **U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) Member Cathy Harris.** MSPB is an independent agency that protects civil servants against partisan political and other prohibited practices;²⁰

¹³ Newsweek, “US Regulators Open Probe Into Tesla Vehicles Over Remote Driving Feature,” Matthew Impelli, January 7, 2025, <https://www.newsweek.com/tesla-self-driving-feature-investigation-national-highway-traffic-safety-administration-2011309>.

¹⁴ Federal Aviation Administration, “FAA Proposes \$633,009 in Civil Penalties Against SpaceX,” press release, September 17, 2024, <https://www.faa.gov/newsroom/faa-proposes-633009-civil-penalties-against-spacex>.

¹⁵ The Washington Post, “Elon Musk and SpaceX Face Federal Reviews After Violations of Security Reporting Rules,” Kirsten Grind, Eric Lipton, and Sheera Frenkel, December 17, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/17/technology/elon-musk-spacex-national-security-reporting.html>.

¹⁶ Politico, “Labor Department workers fear they’re next on DOGE’s to-do list,” Lawrence Ukenye and Nick Niedzwiedek, February 5, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/05/labor-department-lawsuit-doge-00202644>.

¹⁷ Business Insider, “Tesla settles lawsuit alleging it mishandled hazardous waste,” Grace Kay, February 2, 2024, <https://www.businessinsider.com/tesla-fremont-factory-lawsuit-allegations-mishandled-hazardous-waste-2024-2>.

¹⁸ The Hill, “How to ensure Trump’s new inspectors general are watchdogs, not lapdogs,” Mark Greenblatt, February 11, 2025, <https://thehill.com/opinion/white-house/5136806-president-trump-inspectors-general-firings/>.

¹⁹ U.S. Office of Government Ethics, “OGE has been notified that the President is removing David Huitema as the Director of OGE. OGE is reverting to an Acting Director.,” press release, February 10, 2025, <https://www.oge.gov/web/oge.nsf/News+Releases/FCCCCDB6367A7C0A85258C2D00683079?opendocument>.

²⁰ Economic Policy Institute, “Firing MSPB Member Cathy Harris,” February 12, 2025, <https://www.epi.org/policywatch/firing-mspb-member-cathy-harris/>.

- **Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) Chair** Susan Tsui Grundmann. FLRA is an independent agency that oversees labor-management relations for federal employees,²¹ and
- **U.S. Office of the Special Counsel (OSC) Special Counsel** Hampton Dellinger. OSC is an independent agency that protects whistleblowers and enforces restrictions on partisan political activity by government employees.²²

Altogether, these firings either directly benefit Mr. Musk and his companies or remove guardrails that would hold them accountable to the rule of law. The firings also hurt everyday Americans. The individuals you have fired served important watchdog roles in our government. IGs “protect taxpayer money by rooting out corruption, fraud, waste and mismanagement.”²³ Minority commissioners on multi-member commissions of independent agencies provide dissenting opinions to the majority and allow for balanced decision-making over significant issues.²⁴ In addition to removing agency leadership, you and Mr. Musk are removing career civil servants who would conduct investigations and enforcement actions against lawbreakers. The impacts are vast: in total, your removals of agency heads and career civil servants have affected at least eleven federal agencies with more than thirty-two ongoing investigations, complaints, or enforcement actions on Mr. Musk’s companies.²⁵

Mr. Musk has failed to address conflicts of interest related to his involvement in the Department of Government Efficiency while serving as CEO of multiple companies that have significant interests before the federal government.²⁶ Musk is required to comply with federal conflict of interest prohibitions (18 U.S.C. § 208) that prohibit him “from personally and substantially participating in any particular matter that would have a direct and predictable effect on his financial interests,” but the White House has stated that he will be in charge of policing his own compliance with the law, and he has provided no indication of whether he is doing so.²⁷ Now, these firings have removed the exact individuals in our government who would hold Mr. Musk and his companies accountable for following the law and protect everyday Americans from threats to their health, welfare, safety, and economic well-being. We urge you to immediately

²¹ Government Executive, “Trump apparently fires FLRA chairwoman,” Erich Wagner, February 11, 2025, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/02/trump-apparently-fires-flra-chairwoman/402933/>.

²² The Hill, “Trump sued after quietly firing top whistleblower protector,” Rebecca Beitsch and Zach Schonfeld, February 10, 2025, <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5136145-whistleblower-protection-office-fired-lawsuit/>.

²³ Campaign Legal Center, “The Significance of Firing Inspectors General: Explained,” Danielle Caputo, January 31, 2025, <https://campaignlegal.org/update/significance-firing-inspectors-general-explained>.

²⁴ The American Prospect, “The Quiet Seizure of Independent Agencies,” David Segal, Jeff Hauser, and Eleanor Eagan, June 24, 2020, <https://prospect.org/power/quiet-seizure-of-independent-federal-agencies/>.

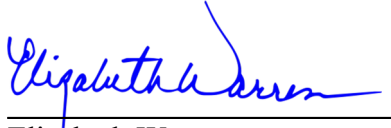
²⁵ The New York Times, “Elon Musk’s Business Empire Scores Benefits Under Trump Shake-Up,” Eric Lipton and Kirsten Grind, February 11, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/11/us/politics/elon-musk-companies-conflicts.html>.

²⁶ Letter from Senator Elizabeth Warren to President-Elect Donald Trump, December 16, 2024, https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/letter_to_trump_transition_reelonmuskconflictsinterest.pdf.

²⁷ 18 U.S.C. § 208; Department of Defense Standards of Conduct Office, “Conflicts of Interest,” <https://dodsoco.ogc.osd.mil/Conflicts-of-Interest/>; CBS News, “The public won't get to see Elon Musk’s financial disclosures. Here’s why that matters.,” Kathryn Watson, February 7, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-public-wont-see-elon-musk-financial-disclosure-why-that-matters/>; CBS News, “The White House says Elon Musk is a “special government employee.” Here’s what that means.,” Aimee Picchi, February 6, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/elon-musk-special-government-employee-what-does-that-mean/>.

reinstate the illegally fired individuals and remove Mr. Musk from his government role unless he addresses his massive and glaring conflicts of interest as required by law.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



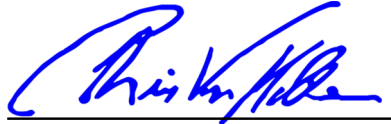
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Gerald E. Connolly
Ranking Member
House Committee on
Oversight and Government
Reform



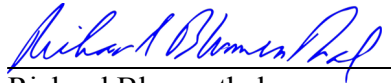
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



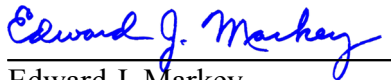
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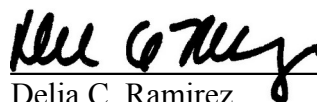
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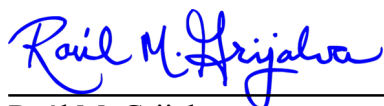
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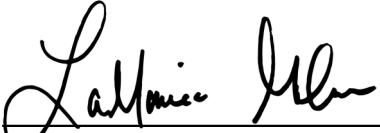
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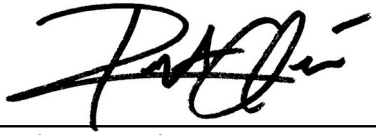
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Jan Schakowsky
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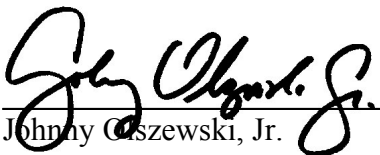
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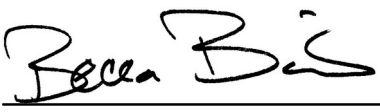
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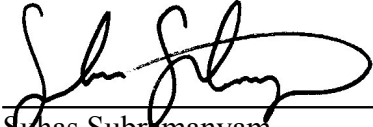
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