

Musk, Trump begin to purge US government workers—except military and police

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Under the direction of the world's richest fascist, Elon Musk, over the last 48 hours hundreds, if not thousands, of US federal employees have been fired across multiple agencies. In order to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy and expanding military and police budgets, thousands of workers across agencies that provide oversight, testing, education and environmental protection are being eliminated.

At this time it appears that the bulk of the current layoffs are hitting probationary workers, as they are easier to terminate. This is only a down payment on what is to come. There is no doubt Musk, President Donald Trump, and the rest of the financial oligarchy they represent are eager to purge permanent government workers as well.

Out of some 2.3 million people working in the US federal government, roughly 200,000 are currently on probation, which typically lasts for a year, but can be as long as three years, depending on the agency and position.

USA Today reported that layoffs were “underway at multiple federal departments.” Foreshadowing tens of thousands more federal job cuts, the *Washington Post* reported on Wednesday night, that “White House officials are eyeing cuts to agency budgets of between 30 and 40 percent, on average, across the government—centered on significant staff reductions.”

The largest layoffs, so far, have been announced at the US Forest Service. On Thursday, Warner Vanderheuel, president of the Forest Service Council, told *Bloomberg Law* that 3,400 workers out of more than 20,000 would be laid off. The agency is currently charged with managing some 193 million acres with a focus on natural resource conservation and managing forests to prevent wildfires.

Over 100 probationary employees at the Department of Education and the Small Businesses Administration (SBA) were fired on Wednesday, according to CNN, which cited union sources and government documents.

The network reported that fired workers received a letter that read in part, “The Agency finds, based on your performance, that you have not demonstrated that your further employment at the Agency would be in the public interest.”

On Thursday, two Department of Energy staffers told *Politico* that their department plans to “lay off most or all probationary employees.” Another DoE source said the planned purge of probationary employees at the Energy Department will be replicated “for the full federal government.”

Also on Thursday, Reuters reported that termination emails had been sent to probationary employees at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) and the General Services Administration (GSA). Probationary staff at the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Reuters noted, “were fired in a group call Thursday.”

An OPM worker told Federal News Network that no union representative was present during the group call and that the meeting's moderator “disabled microphone and camera access for all employees on the call after someone asked about union representation.” The worker said that about 70 employees were on the call.

It is unclear how many probationary workers have, or will be fired. Reuters said that at least 45 workers at the SBA, 100 at the GSA and 160 workers at the Education Department had been laid off. Federal workers on social media have reported layoffs at the US Patent Office, Veteran's Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Internal Revenue Service and Department of Agriculture, among other agencies.

The confirmed layoffs are just the tip of the iceberg, with more on the horizon. In a statement to Federal News Network, an OPM spokesperson menacingly stated, “the probationary period is a continuation of the job

application process, not an entitlement for permanent employment.”

The layoffs come on the heels of an estimated 75,000 workers, roughly 3 percent, accepting a supposed “buyout” from the Trump administration. In a repeat of his 2022 takeover of Twitter, now X, Musk issued a “Fork in the Road” ultimatum to federal employees, offering a deferred resignation with pay supposedly until September 30. The proposal had been on a court-ordered hold after federal unions sued the government to block it, arguing that it was unfunded, illegal and gave workers only a few days to decide.

On Wednesday, a judge lifted a pause on the program and the offer ended at midnight. The Trump administration had hoped more workers would accept the buyout, with White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt previously stating the goal was between 5 and 10 percent of the current federal workforce (100,000 to 200,000 workers).

The layoffs began in earnest this week, following an executive order issued on Tuesday by Trump, which called for mass reductions in the size of the federal workforce under the direction of Musk’s “Department of Government Efficiency.”

Marxists have long maintained that the state is an instrument of class rule, not a neutral arbiter of competing social forces and interests. The US government is not an expression of the democratic will of 330 million people, but a tool of the financial oligarchy, used to advance the class interests of the ruling elite.

Tuesday’s executive order issued by Trump not only underscores this reality, but is a qualitative step towards dictatorship. The executive order requires the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Russell Vought, author of the Project 2025 blueprint that was so reactionary that Trump had to disavow it during the election campaign, to submit a plan to reduce the federal workforce to “maximize efficiency and productivity.”

It calls for agency heads to undertake “large-scale reductions in force” with a focus on all “agency diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.” This means targeting all workers engaged in anti-discrimination efforts, and empowering fascists and bigots.

Notably, the order does not apply to “functions related to public safety, immigration enforcement, or law enforcement.” Exclusions also include “military personnel” and any position that agency heads deem “necessary to meet national security, homeland security, or public safety responsibilities.”

Seeking to sabotage departments by barring them from hiring needed workers, the “Plan” requires agencies to “hire no more than one employee for every four employees that depart.” This would quickly render most departments unable to function, simply from ordinary attrition and retirements.

Asserting direct control over the hiring process, the order calls for the new hires to be made “in consultation with the agency’s DOGE Team Lead.” Furthermore, the agency should not fill “any vacancies for career appointments that the DOGE Team Lead assesses should not be filled,” unless overruled by the agency’s head—another Trump appointee.

Federal workers, many whose departments are facing complete “deletion,” in the words of Musk, cannot rely on the Democrats, trade unions or courts to protect them. None of the federal trade unions or Democratic politicians have called for strike action, let alone a general strike of all federal workers, to protect jobs and fight the layoffs. Instead, they have filed lawsuits which will either be overruled by pro-Trump judges or produce rulings that Trump will simply ignore.

The anti-worker rampage by Trump and Musk has caused mass anger on social media and protests outside government buildings and on the streets. Last week, thousands of people rallied at state Capitols in opposition to attacks on immigrants, democratic rights and widening inequality. This opposition, independent of the Democratic Party and trade union apparatus, must be built and expanded upon.

An attack on one section of the working class is an attack on all sections of the working class. The fascist counterrevolution sought by Musk and Trump must be countered by a mass movement of the working class based on the program of world socialist revolution.



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