

Musk's data takeover: A weapon for dictatorship and social plunder

Joseph Kishore
18 February 2025

Over the past several days, the Trump administration and Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) have escalated their efforts to gain unprecedented access to a vast trove of data on every individual and organization in the United States.

The latest targets are the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), both of which hold detailed financial and personal information on nearly every American. On Sunday, the acting head of the SSA, Michelle King, resigned, reportedly due to clashes with Musk over DOGE's demand for direct access to the agency's records.

On Monday, numerous media outlets reported on Musk's attempt to seize control over the millions of tax records collected by the IRS, which include Social Security numbers, employment records, political donations and other information on every taxpayer, business and nonprofit organization in the country.

To execute this plan, Musk's DOGE has installed 25-year-old Gavin Kliger as a special adviser to the acting IRS commissioner. Kliger exemplifies the cabal that Musk has assembled. He has publicly praised white supremacist Nick Fuentes and called for the execution, by military tribunal, of undocumented immigrants convicted of crimes. He has cited Holocaust denier Ron Unz as a key political influence.

This was followed by two major court rulings that pave the way for DOGE's data takeover. A federal judge in the US District Court in D.C. declined to block Musk and DOGE from accessing data across multiple executive branch agencies, including the Office of Personnel Management and the departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Energy, Transportation and Commerce. A previous ruling by a separate judge in the same court on Monday night granted DOGE access to student records at the Department of Education.

Tomorrow, February 20, marks one month since the

second inauguration of Donald Trump. The initial weeks of the new regime were focused on a series of executive orders that, under the pretense of a non-existent "invasion" at the border, arrogate to the president the power to violate free speech rights, deport immigrants, and create the framework for deploying the military against domestic opposition within the United States.

The essential class content of these actions—in a government of, by and for the oligarchy—has been revealed over the past two weeks. The mass firing of federal workers and the transfer of extraordinary powers to Musk and DOGE is part of a broader assault on the entire working class.

An immediate objective of DOGE's data acquisition is the dismantling of any federal department that provides social services or regulatory oversight. Musk is leading an operation to slash \$2 trillion in spending on programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, while accelerating mass firings of federal workers. Over the weekend, thousands of employees at the Department of Health and Human Services were terminated in what workers have referred to as the "Valentine's Day Massacre."

But the broader aim is to create an all-encompassing AI-driven database that can be used to track, monitor and suppress political opposition. By integrating financial data, medical records, employment histories and law enforcement databases, Musk and Trump are constructing a system that will enable them to identify and target their opponents with surgical precision.

Trump and Musk outlined their theory in a joint interview with Fox's Sean Hannity Tuesday night. Musk's DOGE agency is seen not simply or even primarily as a mechanism for implementing cuts, but as an instrument of executive dictatorship.

"These executive orders," Trump said, "I sign them, and now they get passed on to [Musk] and his group... and

they get it done.” DOGE needs direct control of the data and systems of all federal agencies to implement Trump’s dictatorial actions.

All of this is blatantly illegal and unconstitutional. The administration is operating on the principle that the president has unlimited powers that cannot be constrained by the law or the courts. Over the weekend, Trump made this explicit, declaring in a post that remained pinned at the top of the White House X account for several days: “He who saves his Country does not violate any Law.” In other words, Trump operates on the basis of the *Führerprinzip*—the principle that the “leader” alone determines what is legal and what is not.

In one of the few commentaries appearing in the media, the *New York Times*’ Thomas Edsall cited on Tuesday constitutional law professor Rogers Smith, who called Musk’s power grab “unprecedented in US history.” Smith warned that it violates the appointments clause of the Constitution, which requires Senate approval for principal officers. If Trump claims Musk is merely a consultant, he is still illegally delegating government power to a private individual.

Smith added that if the Supreme Court rules in Trump’s favor or if the administration ignores an unfavorable court ruling, “constitutional democracy in America will be in serious, perhaps fatal jeopardy.”

The response of the Democratic Party to the actions of the Trump administration in its first weeks has combined complicity and cowardice. While the Republicans, when in the minority, take every possible measure to paralyze the government, the Democrats have allowed nearly every one of Trump’s cabinet nominees to sail through confirmation hearings.

The Democrats have proposed no strategy beyond appealing to the courts, which are stacked with Trump appointees and which the administration has vowed to defy. Last week, Vice President Vance declared on X that “Judges aren’t allowed to control the executive’s legitimate power,” while Musk threatened, on February 12, that “there needs to be an immediate wave of judicial impeachments” targeting anyone who rules against the actions of the administration.

Far from mobilizing mass opposition, leading Democratic figures are urging inaction. Longtime Democratic strategist James Carville advised on Monday that the party should “play possum” as opposition develops and simply “let this germinate.” “Let’s just get out of the way,” he said.

Axios reported that top Democrats suspect Trump will “ignore one of the many major court rulings that’ll be coming his way,” but are only “gaming out legal and political responses behind the scenes.” House Democratic Caucus Chair Pete Aguilar issued a meaningless statement: “Nobody is above the law, no matter how many times Donald Trump thinks he is. We’ll let this process go through the courts, and we’ll be prepared to talk about it and react.” In other words, the Democrats plan to do nothing.

The Democrats are unwilling and incapable of mounting a serious fight against the drive toward dictatorship because they, along with the Republicans, represent the interests of the financial oligarchy. They agree with the essential program of the Trump administration in terms of social policy. Their primary concern is the growth of opposition from below, which could escape the control of the ruling class state apparatus.

The only force capable of stopping the transformation of the US into a dictatorship is the working class.

The Socialist Equality Party is spearheading the fight to mobilize the working class against the Trump administration’s drive toward dictatorship. The SEP calls for the formation of independent rank-and-file and neighborhood committees in every workplace and city across the country. These committees must become centers of resistance, organizing workers and youth against Trump’s authoritarian rule, the complicity of the Democratic Party and the destruction of social programs and public services.

The working class must take up the fight through strikes, protests and mass actions to oppose the dictatorship of the financial oligarchy and defend its social and democratic rights.

The struggle against dictatorship cannot be separated from the struggle against capitalism. The SEP calls for the seizure of the ill-gotten wealth of the billionaires, the dismantling of the imperialist war machine, and the establishment of a workers’ government to reorganize society on the basis of social need, not private profit. We urge all those who want to take up this fight to join and build the Socialist Equality Party.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)