

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

March 11, 2025

Mr. Russell Vought
Acting Director
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
1700 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20552

Dear Mr. Vought:

We write regarding your decision to cease the vital work of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) and cut off the agency's funding. The CFPB saves Americans money every day by protecting consumers from unfair, deceptive, or abusive practices by financial institutions. We urge you to rescind your orders ceasing the CFPB's work and to restore the CFPB to fully operational status.

On February 3, 2025, Treasury Secretary and then-Acting Director of the CFPB, Scott Bessent, issued a directive instructing CFPB employees not to pursue any existing or new enforcement actions or investigations and halt rulemaking and informal guidance activity.¹ On February 8, 2025, after becoming Acting Director of the CFPB, you broadened that order to stop the agency from monitoring large banks, predatory lenders, and other financial firms for illegal activity against consumers.² Also on February 8, 2025, you announced on X that the CFPB would not be drawing down its next round of funding.³ Notably, your announcements prompted

¹ *Treasury Secretary Bessent, Tapped to Run CFPB, Orders Staff to Halt Work*, NPR (Feb. 4, 2025) (online at www.npr.org/2025/02/03/nx-s1-5285356/treasury-secretary-bessent-acting-cfpb-director); see also Letter from Democratic Members of Congress to Acting Director Russell Vought, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and Secretary Scott Bessent, Department of the Treasury (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.banking.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/letter_to_vought_bessent_on_cfpb.pdf).

² *Russell Vought, CFPB's New Acting Head, Issues Directives to Halt Parts of Bureau Activity*, NBC News (Feb. 8, 2025) (online at www.nbcnews.com/politics/doge/russell-vought-consumer-financial-protection-bureau-trump-rcna191356); *Vought Cuts Off CFPB Funding, Saying It's Not Necessary to Run the Agency*, Politico (Feb. 9, 2025) (online at www.politico.com/news/2025/02/09/vought-cuts-off-cfpb-funding-00203261).

³ Russ Vought (@russvought), X (Feb. 8, 2025) (online at <https://x.com/russvought/status/1888423503537360986?s=46>).

the agency's second ranking official and its enforcement director to resign, further impeding its crucial work.⁴

As the *New York Times* noted, a “sudden, complete halt to the work of a prudential regulator—agencies like the [CFPB], which are assigned to oversee the safety of America’s institutions and guard against systemic risks—has no precedent.”⁵ A leading nonpartisan law and policy institute, moreover, described your decisions as “another example of the donor class holding sway over Washington.”⁶

Congress created the CFPB in the wake of the devastating 2008 financial crisis, in which millions of Americans lost their homes and savings, due in large part to the practices of predatory mortgage lenders and large banks.⁷ Since its inception, the agency has played a critical role in “protect[ing] consumers from unfair, deceptive, or abusive practices and tak[ing] action against companies that break the law.”⁸ In carrying out this mission, the CFPB has protected American workers, senior citizens, veterans, student borrowers, and others from predatory, fraudulent and discriminatory practices by banks, mortgage lenders, credit reporting agencies, debt collectors, auto and student loan companies, and money transfer services.⁹ As of January 30, 2025, the CFPB had brought nearly 400 enforcement actions, obtained approximately \$19.7 billion in monetary compensation, principal reductions, canceled debts and other consumer relief on behalf of approximately 195 million consumers or consumer accounts, and obtained approximately \$5 billion in civil penalties against financial services companies.¹⁰

⁴ *U.S. Consumer Watchdog’s Enforcement, Supervision Chiefs Say They Resigned*, Reuters (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.reuters.com/world/us/us-consumer-watchdogs-enforcement-supervision-heads-announce-resignation-2025-02-11/).

⁵ *Confusion Reigns As “A Wrecking Ball” Hits the Consumer Bureau*, New York Times (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/02/10/business/cfpb-shutdown-confusion.html).

⁶ Brennan Center, *Who Benefits from Trump’s Move to Shut Down Consumer Financial Protection Bureau?* (Feb. 24, 2025) (online at www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/who-benefits-trumps-move-shut-down-consumer-financial-protection-bureau#:~:text=Today%2C%20the%20CFPB%20has%20broad,companies%2C%20and%20money%20transfer%20services.).

⁷ See Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, *Building the CFPB* (online at www.consumerfinance.gov/data-research/research-reports/building-the-cfpb/) (accessed Feb. 27, 2025); Center for American Progress, *The 2008 Housing Crisis* (Apr. 13, 2017) (online at www.americanprogress.org/article/2008-housing-crisis/).

⁸ Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, *The CFPB* (online at www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/the-bureau/) (accessed Feb. 27, 2025).

⁹ See *id.*

¹⁰ Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, *Enforcement by the Numbers* (online at www.consumerfinance.gov/enforcement/enforcement-by-the-numbers/) (accessed Feb. 27, 2025).

Your decision to dramatically scale back the CFPB's activities has frozen this crucial work and left American consumers vulnerable. The CFPB's enforcement actions pending at the time you issued your stop-work order include, for example:

- A lawsuit against a leading credit reporting agency for allegedly conducting sham investigations of errors in consumer credit reports, wrongly preventing consumers from obtaining credit or making it more expensive for them to do so;¹¹
- A lawsuit against a major bank for allegedly falsely representing to customers that the interest rate on one of its savings accounts was the nation's "top," "best," and "highest," when the rate in fact fell far short of what the bank marketed to customers;¹²
- An action against a credit card issuer that allegedly sold enrollment in a program falsely marketing its card to consumers as a regular credit card, when in fact the card could only be used to purchase goods from the issuer's overpriced online store—and forced customers to endure a series of offers before canceling and refused to provide full refunds unless consumers threatened to seek relief from their bank or the Better Business Bureau;¹³ and
- An action along with seven state attorneys general against a debt relief company and other defendants that allegedly operated a scheme to collect exorbitant, illegal advance fees from vulnerable consumers in financial difficulty through a web of interrelated companies that acted as a façade for the debt relief operation.¹⁴

Your order similarly prevents the CFPB from making rules and issuing guidance to prevent such predatory, fraudulent, and abusive conduct from occurring in the first place.¹⁵

Although you have attacked the CFPB—wholly without substantiation—as “a woke & weaponized agency against disfavored industries and individuals for a long time[.]” closer

¹¹ *CFPB v. Experian Credit Solutions, Inc.*, No. 8:25-cv-24 (C.D. Cal. Jan. 7, 2025) (online at https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_experian-information-solutions-complaint_2025-01.pdf).

¹² *CFPB v. Capital One Financial Corp., et al.*, No. 1:25-cv-00061 (E.D. Va. Jan. 14, 2025) (online at https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_capital-one_complaint_2025-01.pdf).

¹³ *CFPB v. Reliant Holdings, Inc., et al.*, No. 2:24-cv-01301 (W.D. Pa. Sept. 13, 2024) (online at https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_cfpb-v-reliant-holdings-credit-cards-horizon_2024-09.pdf).

¹⁴ *CFPB, et al. v. StratFS, LLC, et al.*, No. 24-cv-40-EAW-MJR (W.D.N.Y. March 27, 2024) (online at https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_first-amended-complaint-stratfs_2024-03.pdf).

¹⁵ See *Consumer Watchdog Ordered to Stop Fighting Financial Abuse and to Work from Home as HQ Temporarily Shuts Down*, CNN (Feb. 9, 2025) (online at www.cnn.com/2025/02/09/business/cfpb-vought-stop-activity/index.html); America's Credit Unions, *Potential Impacts From a Zombie CFPB* (online at www.americascreditunions.org/blogs/compliance/potential-impacts-zombie-cfpb) (accessed Feb. 27, 2025).

examination suggests a more plausible motivation for your attempt to shut down the CFPB: opposition to the agency's oversight of large banks and the business interests of President Donald Trump's billionaire supporters.¹⁶ For example, the financing arm of President Trump confidante Elon Musk's Tesla electric car company has been the subject of hundreds of complaints to the CFPB about its debt collection and loan practices.¹⁷ As a result of your order, pending investigations into those practices have been curtailed. The agency would also have reviewed Mr. Musk's effort to integrate peer-to-peer payments into his X social media platform—another effort that will evade any such review if your order remains in place.¹⁸ Other billionaire allies of President Trump likewise have significant interests in entities that the CFPB oversees, including a principal of a major hedge fund, the named partners in a leading venture capital firm, and an investment bank CEO.¹⁹ Your decision to stop the CFPB's work will protect the business interests of ultra-wealthy individuals, large banks, and other financial services companies at the expense of workers, retirees, and other Americans vulnerable to fraudulent, unfair, and abusive conduct.

To ensure the CFPB can continue its urgent mission of advocating for and protecting American consumers, and to prevent continuing and future harm to hardworking Americans, the agency's investigative, enforcement, rulemaking, and other core activities must resume immediately. We request that you provide the following documents and communications no later than March 25, 2025:

¹⁶ Russ Vought (@ russ vought) (Feb. 9, 2025) (online at <https://x.com/russvought/status/1888625239703110013>); *See Financial Firms Hated US Consumer Watchdog, But Rapid Unraveling Creates Limbo*, Reuters (Feb. 13, 2025) (online at www.reuters.com/world/us/financial-firms-hated-us-consumer-watchdog-rapid-unraveling-creates-limbo-2025-02-13/); *Elon Musk's DOGE Takes Aim at Agency That Had Plans of Regulating X*, NPR (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at www.npr.org/2025/02/12/nx-s1-5293382/x-elon-musk-doge-cfpb).

¹⁷ Brennan Center, *See Who Benefits From Trump's Move to Shut Down Consumer Financial Protection Bureau* (Feb. 24, 2024) (online at www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/who-benefits-trumps-move-shut-down-consumer-financial-protection-bureau#:~:text=Today%2C%20the%20CFPB%20has%20broad,companies%2C%20and%20money%20transfer%20services.). Notably, actions to curtail CFPB activities in a way that will benefit Tesla and X are occurring at the same time that Mr. Musk's so-called "Department of Government Efficiency" (DOGE) is attempting to dismantle the CFPB, gaining access to highly sensitive information about Mr. Musk's potential competitors in the process. *See Letter from Democratic Members of Congress to Acting Director Russell Vought, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and Secretary Scott Bessent, Department of the Treasury* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at https://democrats-financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2025.02.11_ltr_vought_bessent.cfpb.pdf).

¹⁸ Brennan Center, *See Who Benefits From Trump's Move to Shut Down Consumer Financial Protection Bureau*, (Feb. 24, 2024) (online at www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/who-benefits-trumps-move-shut-down-consumer-financial-protection-bureau#:~:text=Today%2C%20the%20CFPB%20has%20broad,companies%2C%20and%20money%20transfer%20services); *Letter from Democratic Members of Congress to Acting Director Russell Vought, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and Secretary Scott Bessent, Department of the Treasury* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at https://democrats-financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2025.02.11_ltr_vought_bessent.cfpb.pdf).

¹⁹ *See id.*


1. All documents and communications related to the February 3, 2025 email to CFPB employees directing them to pause issuance and approval of proposed or final rules or guidance, to suspend the effective dates of all final rules that have been issued but have not yet become effective, to not commence or settle enforcement actions, and to not issue any public communications;
2. All documents and communications related to the February 8, 2025 email you sent to CFPB employees directing them to cease all supervision and examination activity, cease all stakeholder engagement, pause all pending investigations and enforcement actions, not approve or issue any proposed or final rules or formal or informal guidance, suspend the effective dates of all final rules that have been issued or published but not yet become effective, and no longer issue any public communications;
3. All documents and communications related to the decision to no longer draw down CFPB funding and the corresponding February 8, 2025 announcement of this policy on X;
4. All documents and communications related to Enforcement Director Eric Halperin's and Supervision Director Lorelai Salas's departure from the CFPB;
5. All communications between any individual at the CFPB and Russell Vought between January 20, 2025 and February 8, 2025;
6. All communications between any individual at the CFPB and any individual working at the White House or in the Executive Office of the President from January 20, 2025 to the present; and
7. All documents and communications, including but not limited to consumer complaints and investigatory materials, related to Tesla, X, or any other company owned in whole or in part by Elon Musk.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X.

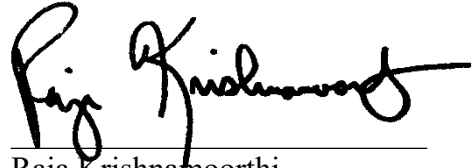
Mr. Russell Vought
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If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Democratic Committee staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,



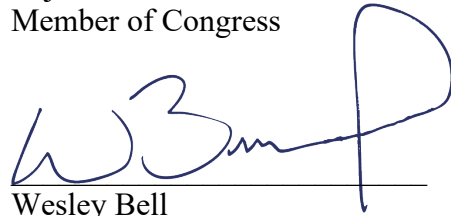
Gerald E. Connolly
Ranking Member



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Maxwell A. Frost
Member of Congress



Wesley Bell
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman