

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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April 10, 2025

Ms. Judith S. Kaleta
Deputy General Counsel and Designated Agency Ethics Official
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. Kaleta,

We write with significant concerns about Elon Musk's clear conflicts of interest at the Department of Transportation (DOT). In an unprecedented arrangement, President Donald Trump has bestowed expansive and unlawful authority to Mr. Musk, an unelected billionaire. Mr. Musk is redirecting billions of taxpayer dollars to fund his own financial interests while slashing federal employees, programs, and services on which all Americans depend. Mr. Musk also remains in charge of a sprawling private-sector business empire that continues to rely on billions of dollars in government funding and has been charged with managing his own conflicts of interest.¹ The Trump Administration has failed to make public Mr. Musk's financial disclosure filings, hiding the true extent of his conflicts from the public. We demand documents and information to bring such conflicts to light, as well as immediate action to address this corrupt arrangement that threatens accountable, democratic governance.

As of February 2025, Mr. Musk and his companies have received a combined total of at least \$38 billion in contracts, loans, subsidies, and tax credits from the federal government and state governments. In fact, Mr. Musk's businesses have been more reliant on government funds than many of his competitors.² Mr. Musk's businesses, which span various industries including the transportation, health, telecommunications, and defense sectors, are also subject to the regulatory jurisdiction of numerous federal agencies, including the Department of Justice and DOT, and several of his companies are presently under federal investigation for safety, labor, or other serious violations.³

¹ *Is Elon Musk's Government Role Unconstitutional? What the Supreme Court Might Say*, ABC News (Feb. 17, 2025) (online at <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/elon-musks-government-role-unconstitutional-supreme-court/story?id=118846052>); *White House Says Musk Will Police His Own Conflicts of Interest*, Bloomberg (Feb. 5, 2025) (online at www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-02-05/white-house-says-musk-will-police-his-own-conflicts-of-interest).

² *Elon Musk's Business Empire is Built on \$38 Billion in Government Funding*, The Washington Post (Feb. 26, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/technology/interactive/2025/elon-musk-business-government-contracts-funding/).

³ *U.S. Agencies Fund, and Fight With, Elon Musk. A Trump Presidency Could Give Him Power Over*

Mr. Musk continues to profit from taxpayer dollars and now finds himself in charge of determining which federal contracts the government will keep and which will be cut—an arrangement that runs afoul of the law.⁴ In an attempt to shield Mr. Musk from transparency and accountability, the Trump Administration has designated him as a Special Government Employee (SGE), a type of temporary executive hire that can only perform limited duties. Mr. Musk’s power at DOGE is expansive, and President Trump has explicitly stated that DOGE is “headed by Elon Musk.”⁵ Mr. Musk’s authority to make sweeping reforms—some of which have already been deemed illegal in court—is clearly consistent with the duties of an “officer of the U.S.” rather than an SGE.⁶ Officers are high-level positions that wield significant authority, and, as such, require Senate approval, which Mr. Musk lacks.⁷

Mr. Musk is further circumventing federal ethics laws to avoid filing the public financial disclosures required of senior Administration officials.⁸ Ethics laws prevent political appointees, including SGEs, from taking part in any matter that might impact their personal finances, per 18 U.S. Code § 208. The law, however, has not stopped Mr. Musk. On the contrary, Mr. Musk’s ability to enrich himself through DOGE is a textbook example of corruption at the taxpayers’ expense.

At DOT, where Mr. Musk’s companies have benefited from contracts, been the targets of multiple investigations, and are angling for vast amounts of new business, his defiance of recusal laws and control of operations directly benefit his businesses.⁹ The known conflicts of interest presented by this arrangement, which are illegal and must be addressed immediately, include:

Them., The New York Times (Oct. 21, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/10/20/us/politics/elon-musk-federal-agencies-contracts.html).

⁴ *Elon Musk’s Business Empire is Built on \$38 Billion in Government Funding*, The Washington Post (Feb. 26, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/technology/interactive/2025/elon-musk-business-government-contracts-funding/); *As Musk Works to Slash Federal Spending, His Own Firms Have Received Billions in Government Contracts*, ABC News (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://abcnews.go.com/US/musk-works-slash-federal-spending-firms-received-billions/story?id=118589121>).

⁵ The White House, *Remarks by President Trump in Joint Address to Congress* (Mar. 4, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/remarks/2025/03/remarks-by-president-trump-in-joint-address-to-congress/).

⁶ *Is Elon Musk’s Government Role Unconstitutional? What the Supreme Court Might Say*, ABC News (Feb. 17, 2025) (online at <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/elon-musks-government-role-unconstitutional-supreme-court/story?id=118846052>); *Tracking the Lawsuits Against Trump’s Agenda*, The New York Times (Mar. 8, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/us/trump-administration-lawsuits.html).

⁷ *Is Elon Musk’s Government Role Unconstitutional? What the Supreme Court Might Say*, ABC News (Feb. 17, 2025) (online at <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/elon-musks-government-role-unconstitutional-supreme-court/story?id=118846052>).

⁸ *Musk’s Starlink Gets FAA Contract, Raising New Conflict of Interest Concerns*, CNN (Feb. 25, 2025) (online at <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/25/business/musk-faa-starlink-contract/index.html>).

⁹ *Elon Musk’s Business Empire is Built on \$38 Billion in Government Funding*, The Washington Post (Feb. 26, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/technology/interactive/2025/elon-musk-business-government-contracts-funding/); *U.S. Agencies Fund, and Fight With, Elon Musk. A Trump Presidency Could Give Him Power Over Them.*, The New York Times (Oct. 21, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/10/20/us/politics/elon-musk-federal-agencies-contracts.html).

Financial Benefits to Musk's Companies from DOT

- Mr. Musk's space exploration company, SpaceX, received at least \$332,700 in financial benefits from DOT between 2003 and 2025.¹⁰ Now that he is a government employee, there have been numerous reports that he is pushing to redirect much larger, more lucrative contracts to his companies, especially Starlink, a SpaceX subsidiary.¹¹
- While considering major cuts to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Mr. Musk tried to sabotage a \$2.4 billion communications contract that the agency had previously awarded to Verizon, a rival to his Starlink company. On X, he posted the baseless claim that Verizon was doing subpar work on the contract to upgrade the FAA's communication system.¹² Following Musk's meddling, the status of Verizon's contract remains unclear, but reporting indicates that FAA officials are considering its termination in favor of Starlink.¹³
- Reporting indicates that Mr. Musk's company Starlink has begun fulfilling a new contract with the FAA to upgrade its airspace system technology, and that FAA officials have specifically directed staff to work on a Starlink contract to the tune of tens of millions of dollars.¹⁴

¹⁰ For purposes of this document, references to SpaceX include subsidiaries such as Mr. Musk's satellite internet service, Starlink, and the reference to financial or taxpayer-funded benefits may include contracts, loans, subsidies, and tax credits. *Elon Musk's Business Empire is Built on \$38 Billion in Government Funding*, The Washington Post (Feb. 26, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/technology/interactive/2025/elon-musk-business-government-contracts-funding/); *U.S. Agencies Fund, and Fight With, Elon Musk. A Trump Presidency Could Give Him Power Over Them.*, The New York Times (Oct. 21, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/10/20/us/politics/elon-musk-federal-agencies-contracts.html).

¹¹ *Musk Is Positioned to Profit Off Billions in New Government Contracts*, The New York Times (Mar. 23, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/03/23/us/politics/spacex-contracts-musk-doge-trump.html) and *Elon Musk Slams Verizon's Tech, Pushes for FAA to Adopt Starlink*, PC Mag (Feb. 27, 2025) (online at www.pcmag.com/news/elon-musk-slams-verizons-tech-pushes-for-faa-to-adopt-starlink).

¹² Mr. Musk alleged on X, "[t]he Verizon system is not working and so is putting air travelers at serious risk," adding, "[t]o be clear here, the Verizon communication system to air traffic control is breaking down very rapidly." The Verizon system, however, is not yet operational. *Musk Slams a Starlink Competitor Amid Questions About \$2.4B FAA Contract*, Politico (Feb. 28, 2025) (online at www.politico.com/news/2025/02/28/musk-starlink-competitor-faa-contract-00206683); Elon Musk (@elonmusk) (Feb. 24, 2025), X (online at <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1894202642639061144>); Elon Musk (@elonmusk) (Feb. 27, 2025), X (online at <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1895129237478162621>).

¹³ *FAA Targeting Verizon Contract in Favor of Musk's Starlink, Sources Say*, The Washington Post (Feb. 26, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/02/26/musk-starlink-doge-faa-verizon/); *Musk Begins Testing His Starlink Terminals in US Airspace System*, Bloomberg (Feb. 24, 2025) (online at www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-02-25/musk-seeks-to-install-starlink-terminals-in-us-airspace-network).

¹⁴ *Musk Begins Testing His Starlink Terminals in US Airspace System*, Bloomberg (Feb. 24, 2025) (online at www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-02-25/musk-seeks-to-install-starlink-terminals-in-us-airspace-network?sref=PFCuwcPr&utm_content=politics&cmpid%3D=socialflow-twitter-politics&utm_campaign=socialflow-organic&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter); *FAA Officials Ordered Staff to Find Funding for Elon Musk's Starlink*, Rolling Stone (Mar. 2, 2025) (online at

Compromising of DOT Regulation and Investigation of Musk's Companies

- In September 2024, the FAA, the agency responsible for air safety, began the process of fining SpaceX \$633,009 for disregarding license requirements for two of its launches, which the agency argued may have compromised safety.¹⁵ Mr. Musk repeatedly clashed with the administrator of the FAA at the time, Michael Whittaker, who resigned on January 20, 2025. Consequently, there was no one at the helm of the FAA when the fatal plane crash at Washington National Airport occurred on January 29, 2025.¹⁶
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which is also under DOT, has opened five investigations into Tesla, several of which concern life-threatening flaws with the car's "self-driving" mode, including unexpected braking, loss of steering control, and crashes.¹⁷
- Neuralink, Mr. Musk's brain-implant company, was fined for violating DOT rules on the movement of hazardous materials.¹⁸

Trump/Musk Corruption and Dismantling of DOT

- Mr. Musk's DOGE operation illegally fired 400 FAA employees as well as 4% of NHTSA's 800 person-workforce.¹⁹
- President Trump illegally fired DOT's inspector general, the agency's independent watchdog responsible for conducting oversight of any potential waste, fraud, abuse, or corruption associated with Mr. Musk.²⁰

www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/elon-musk-starlink-faa-officials-find-funding-1235285246/).

¹⁵ *U.S. Agencies Fund, and Fight With, Elon Musk. A Trump Presidency Could Give Him Power Over Them.*, The New York Times (Oct. 21, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/10/20/us/politics/elon-musk-federal-agencies-contracts.html).

¹⁶ *Last FAA Chief Quit Following Pressure From Elon Musk*, The Huffington Post (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.huffpost.com/entry/elon-musk-faa-administrator-quit-spacex_n_679bb63de4b07c3c821966b2).

¹⁷ *U.S. Agencies Fund, and Fight With, Elon Musk. A Trump Presidency Could Give Him Power Over Them.*, The New York Times (Oct. 21, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/10/20/us/politics/elon-musk-federal-agencies-contracts.html).

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *How Many Federal Workers Have Lost Their Jobs? All The Firing, Layoffs, and Resignations so Far.*, New York Magazine (Feb. 26, 2025) (online at nymag.com/intelligencer/article/how-many-federal-employees-fired-jobs-cut-trump-doge.html); *Federal Agency Investigating Elon Musk's Tesla Hit with DOGE Layoffs*, USA Today (Feb. 24, 2025) (online at www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/02/24/nhtsa-doge-layoffs-tesla-self-driving-investigation/80014006007/).

²⁰ *Inspector General Vacancies After Trump Firings Draw Questions About Agency Oversight*, ABC News (Feb. 6, 2025) (online at <https://abcnews.go.com/US/inspector-general-vacancies-after-trump-firings-draw-questions/story?id=118507727>).

- DOT has hired Mr. Musk's own lawyers to conduct an internal investigation, duplicating work DOT had already tasked to the DOT inspector general.²¹

In order to ensure that DOT is complying with federal ethics and other relevant laws with respect to Elon Musk, please provide the following information, documents, and answers to the following requests by April 24, 2025.

1. A list of all matters under the agency's purview in which any of Mr. Musk's businesses²² has any interest, stake, or engagement;
2. A detailed and complete list of all steps DOT is taking to ensure compliance with all relevant conflicts of interest and ethics laws pertaining to Mr. Musk's businesses;
3. All documents and communications related to procurements under DOT's jurisdiction in which any of Mr. Musk's businesses is a party;
4. A detailed and complete list of all actions DOT is taking to ensure that Mr. Musk is not permitted access to information that would give Mr. Musk's businesses an advantage over competitors;
5. A detailed and complete list, including names, titles, and length of service with the federal government, of any federal employees or contractors terminated, placed on administrative leave, transferred, or in any way removed from their positions by, or on the recommendation or orders of, DOGE, an agency DOGE team, or Elon Musk at the FAA, NHTSA, or elsewhere within DOT who were involved in any investigation into any of Mr. Musk's businesses; and
6. A detailed and complete list of all exemptions DOT programs have received from President Trump's funding freezes.

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. The Committee has legislative jurisdiction over the federal civil service, public information and records, and the reorganization of the executive branch.

The information requested in this letter will inform potential legislative reforms related to matters within the jurisdiction of the Committee. If you have any questions regarding this

²¹ See *Transportation Department Hires Outside Firm to Investigate Air Traffic Controller DEI Practices*, The Washington Free Beacon (March 31, 2025) (online at <https://freebeacon.com/trump-administration/transportation-department-hires-outside-law-firm-to-investigate-air-traffic-controller-dei-practices/>) and *Want to Hire Elon Musk's Lawyer? That Will be \$3,000 an Hour*, Reuters (February 25, 2025) (online at www.reuters.com/legal/want-hire-elon-musks-lawyer-that-will-be-3000-an-hour-2025-02-25/).

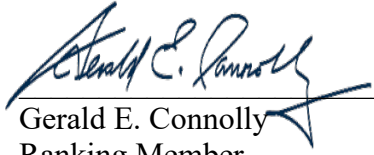
²² For purposes of this document, "Mr. Musk's businesses" refers to businesses in which Mr. Musk is CEO, owner, or otherwise has an ownership interest.

Ms. Judith S. Kaleta

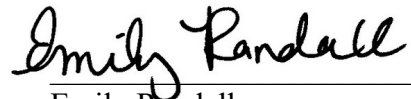
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request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Gerald E. Connolly
Ranking Member



Emily Randall
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman