

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 4, 2025

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro,

We write to ask that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct an investigation of reports indicating that Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent granted Elon Musk and other “Department of Government Efficiency” employees unprecedented access to the federal government’s payment systems on January 31, 2025.<sup>1</sup> These reports are deeply troubling. These critical systems process trillions of dollars of transactions each year and contain sensitive personal and financial information for tens of millions of Americans.<sup>2</sup> These systems ensure that Social Security checks, tax refunds, and Medicare benefits are paid on time and are essential to preventing a default on federal debt.<sup>3</sup> GAO must investigate and determine who was granted access to these systems, why and how this access was granted, and the implications for the nation’s economic and national security.

According to the public reporting, newly confirmed Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent was personally involved in granting Mr. Musk and his team access to these systems, and in pushing out the Department of the Treasury (Department)’s top career official, Mr. David Lebryk, who has long overseen the federal government’s financial infrastructure and its operations, including managing the extraordinary measures the Department has been taking to avoid a default on U.S. debt.<sup>4</sup>

The process by which Mr. Musk’s team obtained access to these systems is troubling – as are the implications. First, the access may threaten economic and national security. These systems control the flow of over \$6 trillion in payments to American families, businesses, and other recipients each year – with millions relying on them for Social Security checks and Medicare benefits, federal salaries, government contract payments, grants, and tax refunds this filing season.<sup>5</sup> Information in these systems is also critical to the Department’s managing payments on

---

1 The New York Times, “Elon Musk’s Team Now Has Access to Treasury’s Payments System,” Andrew Duehren, Maggie Haberman, Theodore Schleifer, and Alan Rappeport, February 1, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/01/us/politics/elon-musk-doge-federal-payments-system.html>.

2 *Id.*

3 *Id.*

4 *Id.*

5 The Washington Post, “Senior U.S. official exits after rift with Musk allies over payment system,” Jeff Stein, Isaac Arnsdorf, and Jacqueline Alemany, January 31, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/01/31/elon-musk-treasury-department-payment-systems/>.

the national debt, and Mr. Lebryk was a key official responsible for the extraordinary measures the Department has been taking to avoid a default that could have devastating consequences.<sup>6</sup> A misstep here could result in a global financial meltdown that costs trillions of dollars and millions of jobs.

In addition, the access provided to Mr. Musk and his team has important privacy implications for millions of Americans. The Treasury payment systems include “sensitive personal information about the millions of Americans who receive Social Security checks, tax refunds and other payments from the federal government.”<sup>7</sup> It is not clear why these individuals were granted unfettered access to such data, what they could do with it once inside these systems, and what protections are in place to ensure the Department has been complying with its legal obligations under the Privacy Act, 26 U.S.C. 6103, as well as other statutes and Treasury regulations that protect such sensitive information about millions of Americans.

Finally, with access to these critical systems, Mr. Musk or others in the Trump Administration may be able to illegally “enact a political agenda”<sup>8</sup> and “unilaterally restrict disbursement of money approved for specific purposes by Congress.”<sup>9</sup> His team reportedly sought access in part so Mr. Musk could “deploy his engineers to find ways to turn off the flow of money from the Treasury Department to things that Mr. Trump wants to defund.”<sup>10</sup>

Given the threats to Americans’ privacy and the national and economic security risks posed by Mr. Musk and his team’s access to critical federal payment systems, we ask that the GAO conduct this investigation as rapidly as possible. This investigation should answer the following questions:

1. Under what circumstances were Mr. Musk and members of his team granted access to the Treasury Department’s federal payment systems?
2. What specific systems were accessed?

---

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, “David Lebryk,”

<https://home.treasury.gov/about/general-information/officials/david-lebryk>; The Washington Post, “The man in charge of knowing when the U.S. runs out of money,” Jeff Stein, May 21, 2023,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/05/21/debt-ceiling-treasury-dave-lebryk/>.

<sup>7</sup> The New York Times, “Elon Musk’s Team Now Has Access to Treasury’s Payments System,” Andrew Duehren, Maggie Haberman, Theodore Schleifer, and Alan Rappeport, February 1, 2025,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/01/us/politics/elon-musk-doge-federal-payments-system.html>.

<sup>8</sup> The Washington Post, “Senior U.S. official exits after rift with Musk allies over payment system,” Jeff Stein, Isaac Arnsdorf, and Jacqueline Alemany, January 31, 2025,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/01/31/elon-musk-treasury-department-payment-systems/>.

<sup>9</sup> The New York Times, “Elon Musk’s Team Now Has Access to Treasury’s Payments System,” Andrew Duehren, Maggie Haberman, Theodore Schleifer, and Alan Rappeport, February 1, 2025,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/01/us/politics/elon-musk-doge-federal-payments-system.html>.

<sup>10</sup> The New York Times, “Elon Musk and His Allies Storm Into Washington and Race to Reshape It,” Theodore Schleifer and Madeleine Ngo, January 29, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/29/us/politics/elon-musk-trump-administration.html>.

3. Which individuals at the Department provided Mr. Musk and members of his team with access?
4. Did the White House or Secretary Bessent place any undue pressure on career officials to grant this access?
5. Did the individuals who were granted access to these systems have appropriate training and clearances?
6. What information in these systems have these individuals accessed, what have they done with it, and what was their rationale?
7. What laws, rules, regulations, or policies are in place to protect privacy with regard to these payment systems, including the protection of tax data under 26 U.S.C. 6103? Were any of these laws, rules, regulations, or policies breached?
8. What laws, rules, regulations, or policies are in place to protect economic and national security (such as protecting programs or individuals from missed payments or preventing those with access to key information in these systems from sharing it with foreign adversaries) with regard to these payment systems? Were any of these laws, rules, regulations, or policies breached?
9. Once obtaining access to these systems, Mr. Musk or others in the Trump Administration may have been able to illegally “enact a political agenda”<sup>11</sup> by “unilaterally restrict[ing] disbursement of money approved for specific purposes by Congress.”<sup>12</sup> Were protections in place to prevent these abuses?
10. These Treasury payment systems are critical to ensuring payment of the national debt and avoiding default – and Mr. Lebryk, who was put on leave when Mr. Musk and others were given access, was a key official responsible for enacting the extraordinary measures the Department has been taking to avoid a default on debt. Did the circumstances leading up to Mr. Lebryk’s departure increase the threat of a default on the national debt?
11. Elon Musk’s X announced that it would be partnering with Visa on a payment system it plans to launch this year.<sup>13</sup> This raises the possibility that individuals granted access to these payment systems may be using information they obtained via this access for their own personal gain. Were appropriate protections in place to identify and manage individuals with conflicts of interest who may have had access to these systems?

---

11 The Washington Post, “Senior U.S. official exits after rift with Musk allies over payment system,” Jeff Stein, Isaac Arnsdorf, and Jacqueline Alemany, January 31, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/01/31/elon-musk-treasury-department-payment-systems/>.

12 The New York Times, “Elon Musk’s Team Now Has Access to Treasury’s Payments System,” Andrew Duehren, Maggie Haberman, Theodore Schleifer, and Alan Rappeport, February 1, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/01/us/politics/elon-musk-doge-federal-payments-system.html>.

13 The New York Times, “Elon Musk’s X Partners With Visa to Provide Financial Services,” Kate Conger, January 28, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/28/technology/x-visa-financial-services.html>.

12. Elon Musk’s Tesla has significant ties to China, where the company operates its largest factory by output and receives favorable treatment from the Chinese government.<sup>14</sup> Were appropriate protections in place to identify and manage national security risks related to individuals who may have had access to the system?

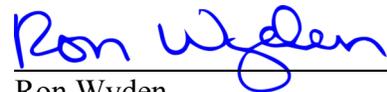
We thank you for your attention to this important matter of economic and national security.

Sincerely,



---

Elizabeth Warren  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Banking,  
Housing, and Urban Affairs



---

Ron Wyden  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member, Committee  
on Finance

---

<sup>14</sup> The Guardian, “Tesla’s path in China clears as Musk courts both Trump and Xi,” Amy Hawkins, November 21, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/nov/22/elon-musk-tesla-china-us-relationship-trump-xi-jinping#:~:text=The%20Shanghai%20government%20gave%20Tesla,up%20without%20a%20local%20partner>.