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POLITICS • ELON MUSK

The person ruling on Elon Musk’s DOGE conflicts of interest is...Elon Musk

By Eleanor Pringle

Senior Reporter, Economics And Markets



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February 6, 2025, 7:00 AM ET



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- **White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Elon Musk's conflicts of interest** will be monitored and addressed by the [Tesla](#) CEO himself. The theory is likely to be tested as Musk's private companies like Tesla and [SpaceX](#) have reportedly been paid billions over the past decade for government work.

It's been left up to the world's richest man, Elon Musk, to decide if he needs to step out of the room when [his work at the Department of Government Efficiency](#) (DOGE) overlaps with his private interests.

Musk, the CEO of Tesla and founder of SpaceX, and his team are [riffing through government contracts and federal spending plans](#), axing those he suspects aren't benefiting the American people.

The only problem is that Musk and his empire of businesses are significant government contractors—estimated to have won around \$15.4 billion in work over the past decade.

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Leavitt responded: “The President was asked and answered this question this week and he said if Elon Musk comes across a conflict of interest with the contracts and the funding that DOGE is overseeing, then Elon will excuse himself from those contracts.

“[Musk] has again abided by all applicable laws.”

This promise is likely to be tested, as the xAI founder has many junctures at which his companies could overlap with government spending.

According to a report by [the New York Times](#) last year, EV maker Tesla won a little over \$350,000 in government work from energy and defense departments.

The *NYT* added that SpaceX racked up some \$15.4 billion in contracts, predominantly because of \$11.8 billion in agreements with NASA.

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DOGE, meanwhile, is investigating [departments from USAID](#) to the FAA and has read-only access to Treasury documents.

Dividing church and state

Leavitt's answer clearly isn't good enough for some politicians on Capitol Hill.

After all, while Musk has been designated a special government employee and, as such, has to operate under certain constraints, this approach is a far cry from the regulations enforced on federal employees and politicians more generally.

Members of Congress, [for example](#), “may not enter into or benefit from a contract or agreement or any part of a contract or agreement” with the federal government.

[Likewise, for federal employees](#), a contracting officer “shall not knowingly award a contract to a government employee or to a business concern or other organization owned or substantially

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The only exception is if the government's needs cannot be met by another contractor.

The autonomy awarded to Musk, in contrast, is unacceptable for Congressman Mark Pocan, a representative for Wisconsin.

Last night, Congressman Pocan [announced his Eliminate Looting of Our Nation by Mitigating Unethical State Kleptocracy \("ELON MUSK"\) bill](#), which would force federal agencies to ax any contracts held by special government employees.

"No government employee, 'special' or not, should have any financial interest in who the government does business with," said the Democratic representative. "Elon Musk is the poster child for this type of potential abuse...there's no way Musk can be objective in what he's doing. Protecting the taxpayers has to be our number one priority."

Representatives for Musk and the White House did not respond when approached by *Fortune* for comment.

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Senator Warren asked for a series of assurances, including whether Musk had signed the Transition Team Ethics Code of Conduct; about DOGE's work-related documents, including correspondence and minutes; and what will be the penalties for those who don't meet ethics standards.

The letter concludes: "Putting Mr. Musk in a position to influence billions of dollars of government contracts and regulatory enforcement without a stringent conflict of interest agreement in place is an invitation for corruption on a scale not seen in our lifetimes."

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About the Author



By **Eleanor Pringle**

Senior Reporter, Economics and Markets

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AI • FORTUNE 500: TITANS AND DISRUPTORS OF INDUSTRY

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POLITICS • IRAN

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POLITICS • IRAN

Trump's dire warning to Iran: 'A whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again'

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POLITICS • WHITE HOUSE

'I'd love to keep that a secret, Mr. President': Trump's boasts about Iran rescue flummox top advisors

By Jonathan J. Cooper, Konstantin Toropin, Farnoush Amiri and The Associated Press

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POLITICS

The U.S. military set up an improvised airfield deep inside Iran to rescue the F-15 airman. Marines just practiced building one in the desert

By Fortune Editors

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During the rescue of the F-15 airman in Iran, the U.S. military blew up two of its own transport planes that had to be left behind

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AI

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PERSONAL FINANCE

Current price of oil as of April 6, 2026

By **Fortune Editors**

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