

As Musk works to slash federal spending, his own firms have received billions in government contracts

NASA is the single largest customer of Musk's company SpaceX.

By [Soo Rin Kim](#)

February 11, 2025, 12:22 AM



Democrats call on AG to probe Elon Musk's alleged conflicts House Judiciary Democrats sent a terse letter Friday to Attorney General Pam Bondi, expressing concerns that Elon Musk's role at DOGE creates "conflicts of interest."

As billionaire businessman Elon Musk has been leading an unprecedented effort to [slash government spending](#), his own companies have, over the last several years, received an increasing amount of funding through government contracts, according to federal spending data.

Over the last decade, Musk's companies SpaceX and Tesla were awarded at least \$18 billion in federal contracts, according to spending data -- with SpaceX winning more than \$17 billion worth of contracts since 2015.

Federal contracts to SpaceX doubled at the beginning of the Biden administration, going from \$1.1 billion in the 2020 fiscal year to \$2.2 billion in the 2021 fiscal year. The contracts continued to grow under Biden, reaching \$3.7 billion during the 2024 fiscal year.

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MORE: As he helps fight DEI, Musk's SpaceX has a huge contract to send 1st woman, person of color to the moon



Since President Donald Trump took office last month, Musk, as the head of the Department of Government Efficiency, has wasted no time carrying out Trump's effort to [trim the federal government](#), including allegedly terminating hundreds of federal contracts across multiple agencies and offering "Fork in the Road" buyouts to two million government employees in the form of a deferred resignation offer.

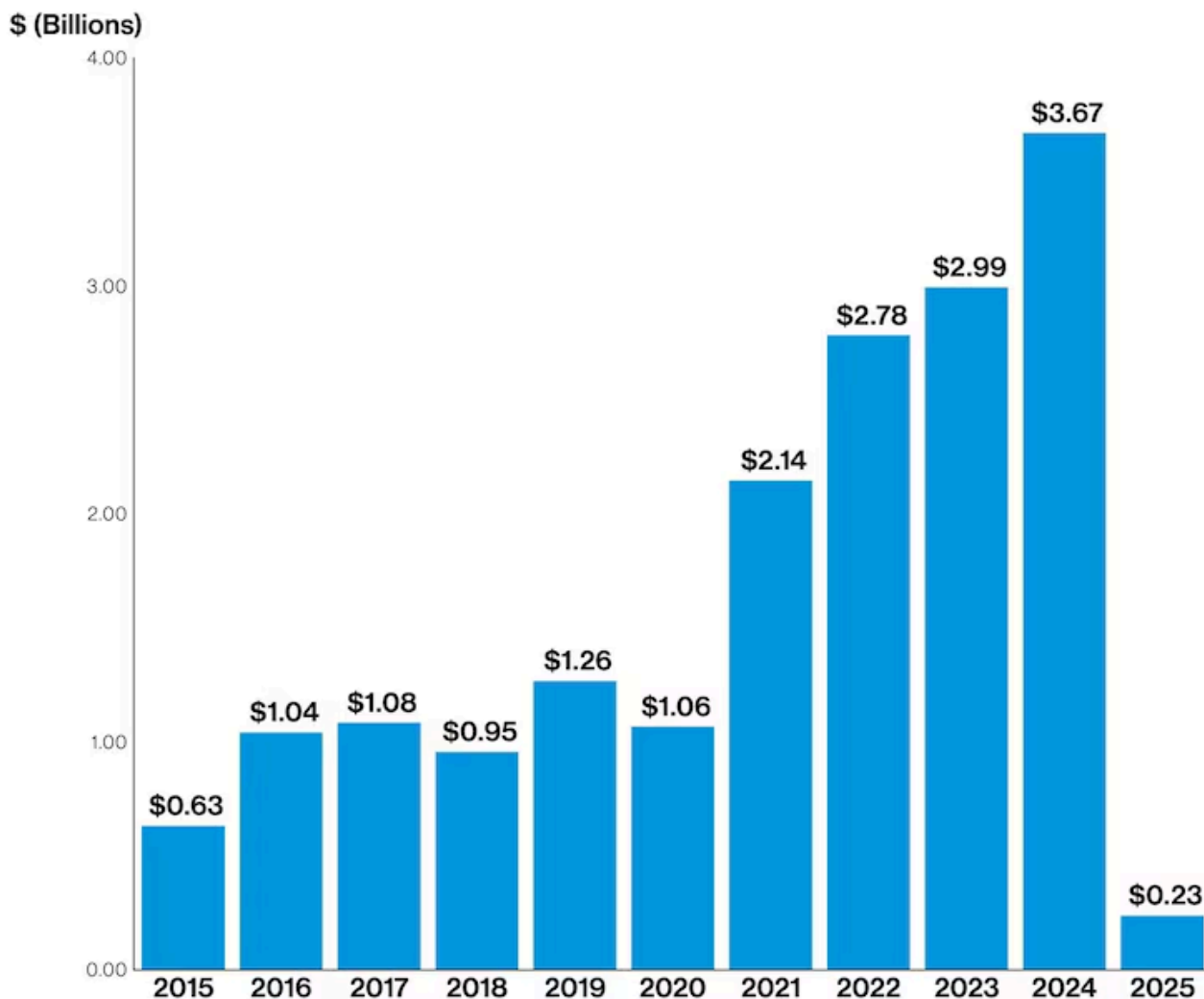
In the first two weeks of the new administration, DOGE's X account claimed it terminated \$1 billion worth of DEIA-related contracts across 30 federal agencies -- though the accuracy of the claim is hard to verify given its vague nature. Musk himself has not discussed the specifics of the cuts.

Last week, DOGE's official social media account claimed it saved more than \$270 million in federal spending by terminating more than a hundred contracts, including cancelling media subscriptions to POLITICO, The New York Times and the Associated Press that Musk and his allies say have cost the State Department, the Treasury Department, and NASA up to millions of dollars.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, asked last week by a reporter about Musk's financial interests with the federal government and his disclosure requirements, suggested that the tech billionaire himself would determine potential conflicts of interest with his businesses.

Federal Contracts to Elon Musk's Companies

SPACE X AND TESLA OVER THE LAST DECADE



SOURCE: USASPENDING.GOV



Federal contracts to Elon Musk's companies SpaceX and Tesla over the last decade

[usaspending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov)

"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," Leavitt said, again stressing that he "has abided by all applicable laws."

Musk's efforts to cut what he calls wasteful spending at the nation's space agency comes as his SpaceX company is the agency's second biggest contractor. Over the past decade, SpaceX has earned more than \$13 billion in contracts from NASA, second only to the amount awarded to the California Institute of Technology.

In 2021, SpaceX netted a major multibillion-dollar contract under the Biden administration to send the [first woman](#) and the first person of color to the moon as part of NASA's Artemis program, whose long-term is the exploration of Mars.

And last year, SpaceX was selected to build a vehicle to bring the International Space Station out of its orbit when its operational life ends in 2030 -- a contract with a potential value of \$843 million.

SpaceX is also one of NASA's biggest contractors for its space transportation service, for which it's been paid billions to carry astronauts and cargo to and from space stations over the years.

Musk's company is also a Defense Department contractor, having received hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of defense contracts to provide launch services for the Air Force during the first Trump administration, in 2018.

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SpaceX's defense contracts then grew under the Biden administration, doubling from \$856 million in 2023 to \$1.8 billion in 2024 as the company won new contracts for the National Security Space Launch program. In all, SpaceX has earned more than \$5 billion in contracts from the Defense Department.

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Representatives for Musk, SpaceX and Tesla did not respond to a request for comment from ABC News.

SpaceX President and COO Gwynne Shotwell said in November that SpaceX has a symbiotic relationship with NASA, who is the company's largest customer.

"We earned that," she said. "We bid it, we were the lowest price, best bidder, we won and we execute. It's not a bad thing to serve the U.S. government with great capability and products."

Musk's electric vehicle company Tesla has also received federal contracts over the last decade that total roughly \$700,000, including General Services Administration contracts for Tesla's solar panels, contract data shows.



Tesla, SpaceX and X CEO Elon Musk arrives for the Inauguration of Donald J. Trump in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda, Jan. 20, 2025 in Washington.

Chip Somodevilla/Pool via Reuters

Some ethics experts have voiced concerns about potential conflicts of interests that could arise from Musk's deep business ties with the federal government and the influence he has in the Trump administration. But the public may never know the true extent of Musk's business relationship with the government, because he was hired as what's known as a "special government employee."

Unlike cabinet level officials and most high-ranking political appointees who are required to publicly disclose to the Office of Government Ethics their financial interests and their ethics agreements in order to avoid conflicts of interest, special government employees go through the OGE's internal financial disclosure and ethics review process, without disclosing any of it to the public.

Musk has promised transparency within DOGE's work -- but so far that's been largely limited to DOGE's social media account posting quick overviews of federal contracts it has terminated. Its official website, doge.gov, still does not have any content, simply showing text saying "The people voted for major reform."

Noah Bookbinder, president of the government ethics advocacy group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, stressed the importance of transparency from Musk and DOGE given his deep financial ties in the federal government.

"Is he going to have an incentive to cut other government spending, but not the spending that benefits him?" Bookbinder said. "That's the kind of decision-making, based on personal interest, that we never want to see in government. We don't know for a fact that that's happening, but we know that there's a potential for that."

"A way to give some comfort there would be for him to be totally transparent about what his interests are and very clear about the steps that he's taking to avoid conflicts of interest," Bookbinder said.

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