



Federal judge blocks DOGE from accessing Americans' personal Social Security data, for now

Politics Mar 20, 2025 4:21 PM EDT

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge on Thursday temporarily blocked Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency from Social Security Administration systems that hold personal data on millions of Americans.

The decision from U.S. District Judge Ellen Hollander in Maryland also requires the team to delete any personally identifiable data they may have. It comes after labor unions and retirees asked for an emergency order limiting DOGE access to the agency and its vast troves of personal data.

They said DOGE's "nearly unlimited" access violates privacy laws and presents massive information security risks. A recently departed Social Security official who saw the DOGE team sweep into the agency said she is deeply worried about sensitive information being exposed.

WATCH: Trump administration's Social Security changes could limit access to benefits for millions

The Trump administration says DOGE has a 10-person team of federal employees at the Social Security Administration, seven of whom have been granted read-only access to agency systems or personally identifiable information.

The administration has said DOGE is targeting waste and fraud in the federal government.

Hollander, though, found that the ends may not justify the means.

"The DOGE Team is essentially engaged in a fishing expedition at SSA, in search of a fraud epidemic, based on little more than suspicion," she wrote.

Attorneys for the government argued the DOGE access doesn't deviate significantly from normal practices inside the agency, where employees are routinely allowed to search its databases. But attorneys for the plaintiffs called the access unprecedented.

DOGE has gotten at least some access to other government databases, including at the Treasury Department and IRS.

At SSA, DOGE staff
data systems that

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Several judges have raised questions about DOGE's sweeping cost-cutting efforts, but they have not always agreed that the risks are imminent enough to block the team from government systems.

Associated Press writer Lea Skene in Baltimore contributed reporting.

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By — Lindsay Whitehurst, Associated Press

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