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Judge blocks DOGE access to Social Security systems, calls for deletion of data

Under the order, all DOGE team members must delete all non-anonymized data from Social Security Administration systems.

BY BILLY MITCHELL • MARCH 21, 2025

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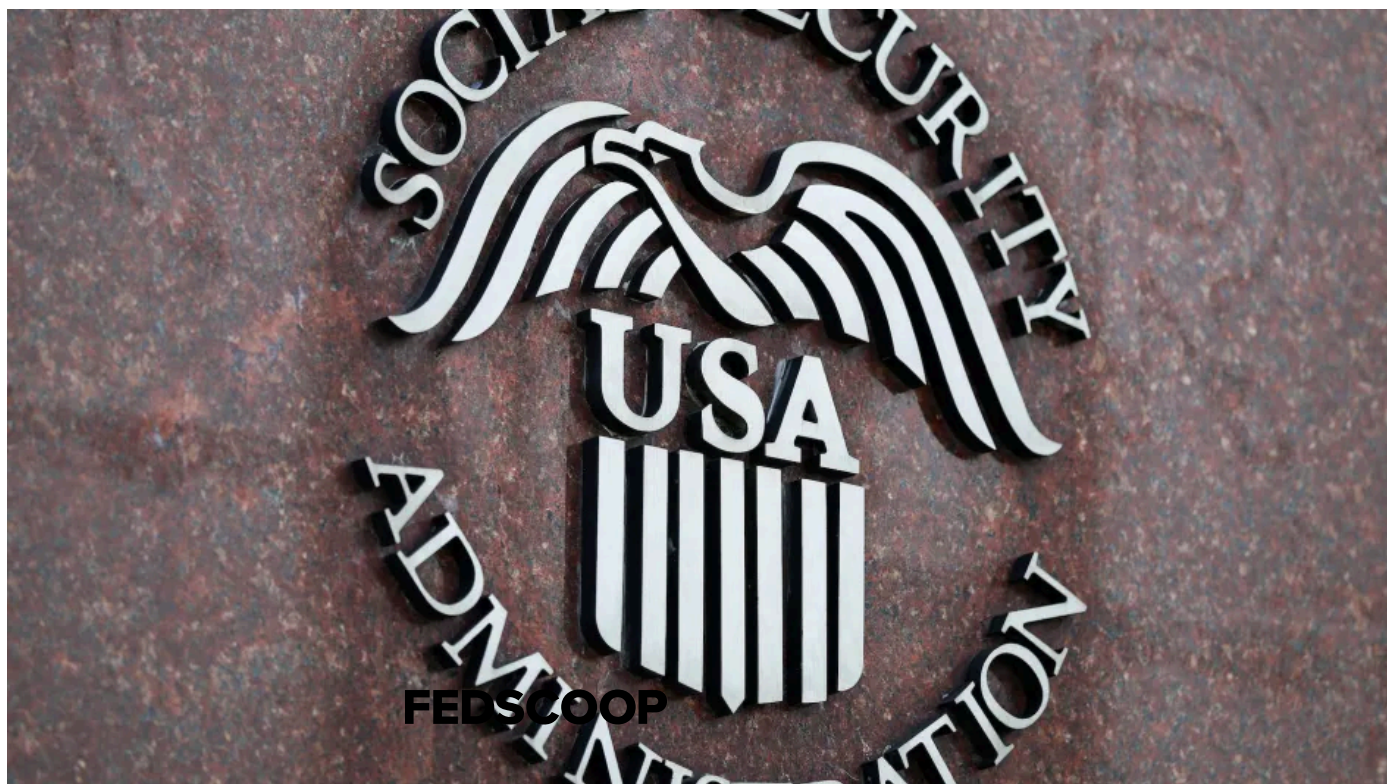


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A sign in front of the entrance of the Security Administration's main campus on March 19, 2025 in Woodlawn, Md. (Photo by Kayla Bartkowski/Getty Images)

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A

federal judge issued a temporary restraining order Thursday blocking Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency from further access to any Social Security Administration systems that contain personally identifiable information.

Judge Ellen Hollander of the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland [also ordered](#) that all DOGE team members associated with the organization's work at SSA, including Elon Musk and U.S. DOGE Service leader Amy Gleason, must disgorge and delete all non-anonymized personal information they obtained from the agency's systems.

The decision is an initial victory in the case where Democracy Forward led a group of unions and an advocacy organization in suing the Social Security Administration and its acting Commissioner Leland

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“The American public may well applaud and support the Trump Administration’s mission to root out fraud, waste, and bloat from federal agencies, including SSA, to the extent it exists. But, by what means and methods?” Hollander wrote in her [137-page opinion](#). “The DOGE Team is essentially engaged in a fishing expedition at SSA, in search of a fraud epidemic, based on little more than suspicion. It has launched a search for the proverbial needle in the haystack, without any concrete knowledge that the needle is actually in the haystack.”

Skye Perryman, president and CEO of Democracy Forward, said in a statement: “Today, the court did what accountability demands—forcing DOGE to delete every trace of the data it unlawfully accessed. The court recognized the real and immediate dangers of DOGE’s reckless actions and took action to stop it. This is important not only for the millions of Americans whose personal data was at risk. Our team will continue its legal efforts to ensure that this **FEDSCOOP** and that those responsible are held accountable.”

While federal courts in other DOGE-related cases have reined in the team’s ability to access certain systems, [like at the Department of the Treasury](#), this is the first case in which a judge has ordered Musk’s team to delete all data obtained in their efforts since entering government Jan. 20.

However, the temporary restraining order in this case is just that: a temporary injunction that will expire after 14 days unless the court takes additional action. Now, the lawsuit will move for full consideration of the judge to hear the plaintiffs’ case for a more permanent block of DOGE’s access to SSA systems.

Meanwhile, SSA will be able to still share redacted or anonymized data with DOGE as long as the receiving party has received the requisite training to handle that data and passed a background check.

Additionally, the order allows for the DOGE team to access non-anonymized PII in cases where they provide SSA with “a detailed explanation as to the need for the record and why, for said particular and discrete record, an anonymized or redacted is not suitable for the specific use.”

By March 24, the SSA and DOGE defendants in the case will need to provide a status report to the court

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“terminate access by all SSA employees to our IT systems,” threatening to move in that direction “and let the courts figure out how they want to run a federal agency.” The order comes after Republicans on the House Ways and Means Committee earlier this month [struck down a resolution from Democrats](#) that called for documentation and other information related to DOGE’s work at SSA.



Written by Billy Mitchell

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