

THE DOGE FRAUD IS COMING FROM INSIDE THE HOUSE

I questioned yesterday whether DOGE's epic misrepresentations in its DOGE receipts page,

is simply a reflection of the ignorance of the DOGE boys Musk has infiltrated into government, the shoddiness of the AI tools they're using, or simply a disinterest in giving a fuck, because once Elon claims this website says something, the right wing will follow along like sheep.

There's still a lot of reporting to be done, but thus far outlets have shown that DOGE:

- Took items that added up to \$16B and claimed it represented \$55B of savings
- Claimed an \$8M savings over a multi-year contract represented \$8B total savings
- Claimed credit for things that happened under Joe Biden, such as lease cancelations and Jimmy Carter's death
- Included contracts that haven't been canceled and ignored costs that such cancelations will necessitate

As I said, thus far, this NPR piece captures how badly the DOGE boys are misunderstanding basic things about federal contracting – and also

That might support a conclusion that these people are just epically incompetent. Except as DOGE gets caught in its errors, something else is happening: it is attempting to cover up its work.

The DOGE website initially included a screenshot from the federal contracting database showing that the contract's value was \$8 million, even as the DOGE site listed \$8 billion in savings. On Tuesday night, around the time this article was published, DOGE removed the screenshot that showed the mismatch, but continued to claim \$8 billion in savings. It added a link to the original, incorrect version of the listing showing an \$8 billion value.

[illegible]

A screenshot of the DOGE

website on Tuesday. The image showing the \$8 million value of the contract was later removed. Credit...The New York Times

Even the \$8 million is an upper bound on the amount saved by canceling the contract. Since \$2.5 million had already been spent on the contract, according to data on USAspending.gov, that suggests that canceling it saved \$5.5 million at most.

This thread, from a pseudonymous person on Xitter whose findings have been corroborated and picked up by others, notes several other attempts to cover up errors:

- DOGE stopped triple-counting one line item
- DOGE was claiming credit for the 80% of an IT contract that had already been spent

But having identified systematic problems (which NPR also did), DOGE not only didn't make those fixes systematically, but it continues to claim it has identified \$55B of savings.



This is a government website.

At some point, the continued claim of savings based on systematic errors, the continued claim of \$55B in savings, amounts to fraud. Deliberate deception in service of justifying DOGE.

DOGE has found fraud. The fraud it is engaged in in plain sight on its success page.

The DOGE fraud is coming from inside the house.

That, plus some of the court filings submitted in lawsuits, has led me to suspect something else is going on. It's not, as the very good NPR piece suggests, that Elon's DOGE boys don't know what the fuck they're looking at, though I have no doubt they don't (I'm also not sure anyone has a basis to assess their coding; Edward "Big Balls" Coristine's former colleagues mocked his skills when he learned he had joined DOGE).

"There's no doubt that these young people [Musk] has working for him are very intelligent coders, genius coders, but they're limited," retired senior contracting officer Christopher Byrne said, referring to DOGE team members who have apparently been identifying cuts across government agencies. "They don't understand the processes, they don't understand how things work, they don't understand contracts, they don't understand grants," Byrne said.

Rather, I think it stems from the fact that Trump (and Project 2025, in the guise of DOGE) are using an existing entity – the United States Digital Service, an entity set up by Barack Obama – to do something entirely different.

Trump first repurposed USDS on his first day in office, with an Executive Order. That order generally called for DOGE to do the kinds of things it had been doing – technological modernization, of the sort smart engineers might be qualified to do.

Sec. 4. Modernizing Federal Technology and Software to Maximize Efficiency and Productivity. (a) The USDS Administrator shall commence a Software Modernization Initiative to improve the quality and efficiency of government-wide software, network infrastructure, and information technology (IT) systems. Among other things, the USDS Administrator shall

work with Agency Heads to promote interoperability between agency networks and systems, ensure data integrity, and facilitate responsible data collection and synchronization.

But then on February 11, Trump issued an Executive Order vaguely ordering DOGE to do far more, including firing a shit-ton of people.

To restore accountability to the American public, this order commences a critical transformation of the Federal bureaucracy. By eliminating waste, bloat, and insularity, my Administration will empower American families, workers, taxpayers, and our system of Government itself.

[snip]

Reductions in Force. Agency Heads shall promptly undertake preparations to initiate large-scale reductions in force (RIFs), consistent with applicable law, and to separate from Federal service temporary employees and reemployed annuitants working in areas that will likely be subject to the RIFs. All offices that perform functions not mandated by statute or other law shall be prioritized in the RIFs, including all agency diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives; all agency initiatives, components, or operations that my Administration suspends or closes; and all components and employees performing functions not mandated by statute or other law who are not typically designated as essential during a lapse in appropriations as provided in the Agency Contingency Plans on the Office of Management and Budget website. This subsection shall not apply to functions related to public safety, immigration enforcement, or law enforcement.

Even the declarations submitted in lawsuits reflect this disjunct. Take the February 13 declaration DOGE member Adam Ramada submitted in a lawsuit the University of California Student's Association filed against the Department of Education. In ¶3 of his declaration, Ramada describes that Trump's EO authorizes DOGE to "modernize government technology."

3. On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14,158, redesignating the United States Digital Service as the United States DOGE Service. The E.O. directs the USDS to modernize government technology and software to increase efficiency and productivity and to follow rigorous data protection standards and comply with all relevant laws when accessing unclassified agency records, software systems, and IT systems. It likewise directs agencies to ensure USDS has full access to all unclassified agency records and software and IT systems.

But the very next paragraph describes that he has been tasked to do something else.

4. I have been detailed to the Department of Education since 28 January 2025 to, among other things, assist the Department of Education with auditing contract, grant, and related programs for waste, fraud, and abuse, including an audit of the Department of Education's federal student loan portfolio to ensure it is free from, among other things, fraud, duplication, and ineligible loan recipients. In addition, I help senior Department leadership obtain access to accurate data and data analytics to inform their policy decisions at the Department. One other USDS employee is also currently detailed to the Department of Education to assist me.

Later, the same declaration describes the access that six DOGE personnel have to student data as stemming entirely from a hunt for waste, fraud, and abuse.

9. The relevant employees require access to Department of Education information technology and data systems related to student loan programs in order to audit those programs for waste, fraud, and abuse.

An updated Ramada declaration filed February 16 disputed plaintiffs' claim that 37 people had access to student information by claiming only six people were implementing Trump's DOGE order(s). But by that point, technological modernization went completely unmentioned. And Ramada *added* a hunt for contracts that were "inconsistent with leadership's policy priorities," something not in his original declaration.

7. I am aware of the list of thirty-seven individuals whom Plaintiff's counsel "believe have been given access to one or more ED records systems," according to Plaintiff's message to Defendants' counsel on February 15, 2025. As stated above, there are only six of us at the Department whose primary role is implementing the President's executive order. I am not aware of any DOGE-affiliated individuals other than the six listed above who have been granted access to Department information technology and data systems or who have otherwise received any Department information protected by the Privacy Act or section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code.

8. Thus far, the six of us have primarily worked to identify contracts and grants that are wasteful, abusive, **or inconsistent with leadership's policy priorities.**

9. It came to my attention today that one of the six employees referenced above has not yet completed ethics or information security trainings. He has been directed to complete both this week and has indicated that he will do so. [my emphasis]

In other words, Trump used the pre-existing entity focused on technological modernization as a front to – first – hunt things that Elon Musk called fraud but were really just things he could spin out of context to inflame the mob, and then use that paranoia to start firing masses of people and getting rid of DEI.

This has nothing to do with the technical mandate of USDS. Which may be why the former Director of Data Science at USDS resigned Wednesday.

But given DOGE's failure to show *any* fraud yet, it likely also has little to do with finding waste, fraud or abuse.

DOGE's "receipts" page appears to be cover, something to show to credulous Republicans to convince them this effort is in pursuit of something good, a hunt for waste, fraud, and abuse. But hidden within a claim to be pursuing technological modernization which got broadened to incorporate an apparently false claim to be hunting fraud is an effort to cut programs appropriated by Congress at scale.

That's why DOGE's receipts page is so shoddy. It's not that the DOGE boys are not accountants, though they are not. It's that their function is something other than the E.O. authorizing their work says it is, and the DOGE receipts page exists solely to sustain the fraud that they're still pursuing waste, fraud, and abuse.

Update: After posting this and calling on Ron Wyden and Patty Murray to ask GAO to investigate whether DOGE is committing fraud, I learned that GAO confirmed it opened an investigation (at that point limited to DOGE

access to Treasury) requested by Wyden and Elizabeth Warren on February 12.