

Vance, Musk Criticize Federal Judge for Blocking DOGE From Treasury System

Broadside against court order signals tensions ahead between White House and judiciary

By Nancy A. Youssef
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Vice President [JD Vance](#) and [Elon Musk](#) led a conservative chorus criticizing a federal [judge who for now has restricted](#) the ability of Musk allies to [access the Treasury Department payment system](#), an early sign of tensions ahead between the White House and the courts.

A Saturday court order by U.S. District Judge Paul Engelmayer in New York temporarily precluded officials without proper background checks and security clearances from accessing the payment system through at least next Friday, including political appointees and special government appointees affiliated with Musk's Department of Governmental Efficiency set up by President Trump.

The order came in response to a lawsuit by 19 Democratic state attorneys general, one of dozens of early legal challenges that aim to stop a whirlwind of aggressive efforts by the White House to slash federal spending and remake the government. Engelmayer, an Obama appointee, said there was some merit to the states' arguments that the administration had crossed legal boundaries by allowing broad access to sensitive Treasury data.

Vance in a social-media post Sunday suggested the judge had acted illegally, saying "judges aren't allowed to control the executive's legitimate power." His remarks followed a series of incendiary posts by Musk, who called for the judge's impeachment.

Administration opponents said the criticisms were out of line and misguided.

"In America, decisions about what is legal and illegal are made by courts of law. Not by the Vice President," former Transportation Department Secretary Pete Buttigieg said on X.

Former Rep. Liz Cheney (R., Wyo.) said the administration's recourse if it disagreed with court rulings was to appeal them. "You don't get to rage-quit the Republic just because you are losing. That's tyranny," Cheney said on X.

The cases filed so far against the Trump administration are in the very earliest stages, giving judges little time to weigh the merits of the lawsuits. But Engelmayer is one of several judges to hit the pause button on DOGE and White House efforts until the courts have more time to consider them. A court hearing is scheduled for Friday.

In another closely watched battle, a federal judge in Boston is scheduled to hear arguments Monday afternoon on whether to block a Trump administration program [that offered buyouts to federal workers](#) who agreed to voluntarily leave their jobs.

In Washington, U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols, a Trump appointee, on Friday paused some of the administration's efforts to further halt work at the [U.S. Agency for International Development](#). His restraining order for now stopped the placement of 2,200 USAID employees on administrative leave and an expedited plan to withdraw nearly all of the agency's overseas workers.

USAID didn't respond to a request for comment and its website wasn't working Sunday.

In another Washington case on Friday, a different judge declined to immediately block Musk's group from accessing sensitive Labor Department data.

Musk has sent members of this team into numerous federal agencies, but it is their work at the Treasury Department that has attracted the most attention and scrutiny.

The Treasury plays a central role in the financial operations of the U.S. government, collecting trillions of dollars in revenue, authorizing trillions in spending and issuing trillions in debt.

Most government payments from any agency pass through this Treasury system, including retirement and healthcare benefits, housing assistance and educational grants. Federal agencies determine who qualifies for these benefits, but that information is then transmitted to the Treasury, which disburses the payments.

At least a week ago, DOGE officials gained access to the system over the initial objections of a career civil servant who was effectively pushed out of his role.

Musk on Saturday defended his group's access to the system, saying DOGE and Treasury had "jointly agreed" to make what he said were sensible changes to reporting requirements for "all outgoing government payments," which he said was "necessary in order to pass financial audits."

He said the changes "are being implemented by existing, longtime career government employees," adding, "It is ridiculous that these changes didn't exist already!"

A Washington judge last week signed off on a temporary agreement that already limited the sharing of sensitive Treasury data, allowing Musk allies who have been named Treasury employees to continue [to access a payments system](#) containing the personal and financial data of millions of Americans but prohibiting them from sharing sensitive data with anyone outside the agency. She also limited them to "read-only" access, meaning they can read records but not alter them.

The Democratic attorneys general said the true limitations on DOGE's access remain unclear.

Trump, in a Fox News interview Sunday, repeated his earlier comments that DOGE will examine the Education Department next. He also said, again, that DOGE will look at military spending.