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Former USDS Employees Exit DOGE Amid Sweeping Changes; Musk Calls Them Democrat Political Holdovers

Following DOGE's transformation, 20 former USDS employees resigned, citing concerns over leadership and hiring practices. Elon Musk dismissed their exit, calling them "Democrat political holdovers"; White House names Amy Gleason as acting administrator.

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Elon Musk

Before it was renamed the Department of Government Efficiency and handed over to Elon Musk to direct, the United States Digital Service consisted of approximately 100 civil service employees.

Forty of its original employees were fired once USDS became DOGE, and on Tuesday, the Associated Press reported that a further 20 have now quit over practices and procedures implemented following the change in administration. They describe participating in 15-minute interviews conducted by people with White House visitor badges, a day after President Trump was inaugurated. In a strongly worded resignation letter, former employees alleged that multiple interviewers declined to disclose their identities, probed into political affiliations, sought to create divisions among colleagues, and displayed minimal technical expertise.

The letter, dated February 25 and addressed to Susan Wiles, President Donald Trump's Chief of Staff, notes that “no one has been identified internally as the official Administrator or leader of DOGE” since the organization was moved from OMB.

When asked this very question during a press briefing on Tuesday, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt also declined to identify who currently holds the office of DOGE Administrator. “I’m not going to reveal the name of that individual from this podium,” she responded to a reporter's question, saying only that there were both political appointees and career public servants “helping to run the day-to-day operations.” Later on Tuesday, Amy Gleason, a former official at the U.S. Digital Service, was named the acting DOGE administrator, according to the White House.

Mr. Musk, the defacto head of the organization, is not a DOGE employee, according to representations made by the government in court. However, “the President tasked Elon Musk to oversee the DOGE effort,” Ms. Leavitt maintained.

The former employees contend that DOGE's actions thus far—“firing technical experts, mishandling sensitive data, and breaking critical systems”—are incompatible with the stated mission of the United States Digital Service, the agency President Trump renamed and transformed into DOGE. However, DOGE has also been credited with modernizing outdated government infrastructure, reducing inefficiencies, and saving taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. Mr. Musk said on Wednesday that DOGE will make some mistakes while making these changes, but it will quickly correct them. The agency’s initiatives, such as automating procurement processes to cut over \$250 million in waste and revamping federal benefits platforms to reduce application wait times by more than 40%, have demonstrated its commitment to improving government operations despite ongoing criticisms.

Even so, the departing staff — who say they joined USDS to advance its goal of “modernizing Federal technology and software to maximize governmental efficiency and productivity” — said DOGE in its current form will not be able to “deliver better services to the American people through technology and design,” as USDS was working to do.

Mr. Musk, who at the recent Conservative Political Action Conference brandished a chainsaw on stage, indicating it was “for bureaucracy,” relegated the Associated Press’s report on the resignation letter as “more fake news.” In a post on X, formerly Twitter, he called the former staffers “Dem political holdovers who refused to return to the office.”

“They would have been fired had they not resigned,” Mr. Musk stated.