

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 28, 2025

Janet Petro
Acting Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20546

Chris Rocheleau
Acting Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Ms. Petro and Mr. Rocheleau:

We write with serious concerns regarding recent reports that the federal agencies you lead – the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), respectively – have awarded or may soon award billions of dollars in federal contracts to private companies controlled by Elon Musk, a Special Government Employee. If accurate, this presents a striking new phase in Mr. Musk’s conflicts of interest. Mr. Musk holds unprecedented leverage over you and your agencies by directing ongoing efforts to substantially influence, alter, and undercut your departments’ operations, personnel, and funding. Simultaneously awarding his private companies with billions of dollars in federal contracts raises grave questions as to whether you and your agencies are enabling corrupt favoritism to benefit Mr. Musk.

On February 21, 2025, NASA announced that it selected Mr. Musk’s company, SpaceX, to provide launch services for the Near-Earth Object Surveyor mission, which is intended to detect and observe asteroids and comets that could potentially pose an impact threat to Earth.¹ According to NASA, the total cost of the launch service on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket is approximately \$100 million.²

Three days later, on February 24, 2025, the FAA announced via Mr. Musk’s platform, X, that the agency “has been considering the use of Starlink,” a subsidiary of Mr. Musk’s company, SpaceX, to increase reliable weather information for the aviation community.³ The same day, Mr. Musk posted on X: “The Verizon system is not working and so is putting air travelers at serious risk.”⁴ In an effort to take over a \$2.4 billion federal contract with the FAA held by Verizon, Mr. Musk has reportedly approved a shipment of 4,000 Starlink terminals to the FAA to upgrade critical infrastructure.⁵ FAA officials confirmed that several Starlink terminals had been installed in New Jersey and Alaska⁶ and the agency is reportedly “close to canceling” Verizon’s contract and awarding the work to Mr. Musk’s company in a significant dismantling of conflict of interest protections in government

¹ NASA, “NASA Awards Planetary Defense Space Telescope Launch Services Contract,” (February 21, 2025), <https://www.nasa.gov/news-release/nasa-awards-planetary-defense-space-telescope-launch-services-contract/#:~:text=NASA%20has%20selected%20SpaceX%20of,an%20impact%20threat%20to%20Earth>.

² *Id.*

³ @FAANews, (February 24, 2025), <https://x.com/FAANews/status/1894191384019525693>.

⁴ @elonmusk, (February 24, 2025), <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1894202642639061144>.

⁵ Jason Leopold and Allyson Versprille, *Musk Begins Testing His Starlink Terminals in US Airspace System*, (February 24, 2025), https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-02-25/musk-seeks-to-install-starlink-terminals-in-us-airspace-network?sref=PFCuwcPr&utm_content=politics&cmpid%3D=socialflow-twitter-politics&utm_campaign=socialflow-organic&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.

⁶ Jason Leopold and Allyson Versprille, *Musk Begins Testing His Starlink Terminals in US Airspace System*, (February 24, 2025), https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-02-25/musk-seeks-to-install-starlink-terminals-in-us-airspace-network?sref=PFCuwcPr&utm_content=politics&cmpid%3D=socialflow-twitter-politics&utm_campaign=socialflow-organic&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.

contracts.⁷ Furthermore, several employees of Mr. Musk’s parent company of Starlink, SpaceX, have joined the FAA – an agency tasked with regulating SpaceX activities and one of several federal Departments that have conducted investigations and reviews of Mr. Musk’s company for violating safety rules.⁸

We strongly support the need to upgrade federal technological systems through public-private partnerships and contracts, but this cannot be done through corruption and graft. Mr. Musk – a man worth over \$350 billion⁹ – carries significant influence over President Trump and federal government agencies, even as he faces regulatory reviews and federal investigations across almost a dozen federal departments and independent agencies, including the Department of Transportation, of which FAA is a part.¹⁰ Mr. Musk’s profound conflicts of interest risk fundamentally undermining public trust in your agencies at a moment in which trust in the missions of NASA and the FAA have never been more important.

On February 10, 2024, Senator Schiff sent letters to former Director of the Office of Government Ethics (OGE), David Huitema, and White House Chief of Staff Susan Wiles requesting clarification regarding Mr. Musk’s compliance with federal conflicts of interest, ethics, and reporting requirements.¹¹ Following President Trump’s announcement firing Mr. Huitema without cause and designating Secretary of Veterans Affairs Doug Collins as acting OGE Director,¹² Senator Schiff sent a follow-up letter requesting that the OGE preserve all records and correspondence regarding Mr. Huitema’s removal and inquiring, yet again, about Mr. Musk’s financial reporting obligations and any conflict of interest considerations communicated with the OGE on behalf of the White House.¹³

To ensure that the Senate can undertake its constitutional oversight and legislative functions, including consideration of potential reforms to strengthen existing statutes, please take the following measures and respond to the questions below by March 7, 2025:

1. Preserve all records and correspondence since January 20, 2025, in NASA and the FAA’s possession regarding federal contract awards.
2. Preserve all records and correspondence in NASA and the FAA’s possession regarding any companies in which Mr. Musk retains a financial interest.

⁷ Ian Duncan, Hannah Natanson, Lori Aratani and Faiz Siddiqui, *FAA targeting Verizon contract in favor of Musk’s Starlink, sources say*, (February 26, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/02/26/musk-starlink-doge-faa-verizon/>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Bloomberg Billionaires Index*, (February 25, 2025), <https://www.bloomberg.com/billionaires/>.

¹⁰ Eric Lipton, David A. Fahrenthold, Aaron Krolik & Kirsten Grind, *U.S. Agencies Fund, and Fight With, Elon Musk. A Trump Presidency Could Give Him Power Over Them*, (October 20, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/20/us/politics/elon-musk-federal-agencies-contracts.html>.

¹¹ Letter from Senator Adam B. Schiff to White House Chief of Staff Susan Wiles, (February 10, 2025), <https://www.schiff.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/20250210-Sen-Schiff-Letter-to-COS-Wiles-on-Musk.pdf>; Letter from Senator Adam B. Schiff to OGE Director David Huitema, (February 10, 2025), <https://www.schiff.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/20250210-Sen-Schiff-Letter-to-OGE-on-Musk.pdf>.

¹² U.S. Office of Government Ethics, “OGE has been notified that the President is removing David Huitema as the Director of OGE. OGE is reverting to an Acting Director. Please see OGE’s Organizational Leadership webpage,” (February 10, 2025), <https://oge.gov/web/oge.nsf/News+Releases/FCCCCDB6367A7C0A85258C2D00683079?opendocument>.

¹³ Letter from Senator Adam B. Schiff to White House Chief of Staff Susan Wiles and VA Secretary Doug Collins, (February 20, 2025), <https://www.schiff.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2025.02.20-Sen-Schiff-Letter-to-COS-Wiles-Sec-Collins-on-OGE-Director-Firing-2.pdf>.

- a. Please provide all records and correspondence in NASA and the FAA's possession with Mr. Musk or any Department of Government Efficiency employees regarding any companies in which Mr. Musk retains a financial interest.
3. Provide the status of any reviews or investigations underway or closed since January 20, 2025, involving companies in which Mr. Musk retains a financial interest, including an investigation by the FAA of SpaceX's Starship rocket following a failed test flight¹⁴ and the FAA's review of alleged safety measure violations related to SpaceX launches.¹⁵
4. Did any White House officials communicate with any NASA or FAA officials about Mr. Musk's conflict of interest considerations, including whether Mr. Musk would need a waiver under 18 U.S.C. § 208, *prior* to Mr. Musk's appointment as a special government employee? If so, please explain the nature of those communications.
5. Did any NASA or FAA employees raise concerns about awarding federal contracts to Mr. Musk's companies, given his role as a Special Government Employee? If so, please explain the nature of those concerns and communications and preserve all records and correspondence in your possession regarding these concerns.

Congress has yet to receive responses from the White House or the OGE regarding Mr. Musk's compliance with federal criminal conflicts of interest law and other ethics and reporting requirements, which reinforces concern that Mr. Musk may not be complying with his legal obligations.¹⁶

We look forward to reviewing your responses.

Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

cc: Susan Wiles
White House Chief of Staff

¹⁴ William Harwood, *FAA orders investigation after SpaceX Starship breaks up and showers debris*, (January 17, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/spacex-starship-explosion-faa-investigation/>.

¹⁵ Heather Vogell, *One Agency Tried to Regulate SpaceX. Now Its Fate Could Be in Elon Musk's Hands*, (February 11, 2025), <https://www.propublica.org/article/elon-musk-spacex-doge-faa-ast-regulation-spaceflight-trump#:~:text=When%20SpaceX's%20Starship%20exploded%20in,world's%20leading%20commercial%20space%20company>.

¹⁶ Letter from Senator Adam B. Schiff to White House Chief of Staff Susan Wiles, (February 10, 2025), <https://www.schiff.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/20250210-Sen-Schiff-Letter-to-COS-Wiles-on-Musk.pdf>; Letter from Senator Adam B. Schiff to OGE Director David Huitema, (February 10, 2025), <https://www.schiff.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/20250210-Sen-Schiff-Letter-to-OGE-on-Musk.pdf>; Letter from Senator Adam B. Schiff to White House Chief of Staff Susan Wiles and VA Secretary Doug Collins, (February 20, 2025), <https://www.schiff.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2025.02.20-Sen-Schiff-Letter-to-COS-Wiles-Sec-Collins-on-OGE-Director-Firing-2.pdf>.