



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

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Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Preparing the Pipeline: Examining the State of America's Cyber Workforce

February 4, 2025

Just over two weeks ago, President Trump was sworn into office. Nearly every day since then, there has been a White House directive undermining the Federal government's ability to serve the American people.

There is confusion about which Federal grant funds President Trump froze last week, and whether the funds are still frozen. The administration refuses to give Americans a straight answer about that. Disaster victims recovering from hurricanes in North Carolina and Florida and wildfires in California are wondering whether FEMA will still be standing after the President has made clear he would like to shut down the agency.

And now, an unelected billionaire from South Africa, Trump's co-president Elon Musk, has gotten into Federal networks and is accessing Americans' sensitive personal data. God only knows what he is doing with Americans' data or what his plans are for our information.

He is inside the Treasury Department's systems where he is not only accessing information but has the ability to change it. These systems have Americans' Social Security numbers and payment information. Trump gave Musk control of our Nation's checkbook, of a bank account funded by Americans' hard-earned tax dollars. We don't know what he's doing with any of it.

His DOGE team also allegedly bought a commercial server, set it up at the Office of Personnel Management, and began accessing intimate details about Americans' personal lives - from home addresses to medical histories. Musk is demanding access to information systems across the Federal government to collect even more data about millions of Americans for reasons that are unclear.

These actions violate a host of Federal laws and policies intended to ensure data privacy and security and protect Federal networks, leading one security expert to describe DOGE's access to Federal data as "an absolute nightmare."

Nevertheless, neither the White House nor my Republican colleagues in Congress have shown any inclination to force Elon Musk and his DOGE underlings to follow the law, adhere to security practices, or justify their unprecedented access to systems and Americans' data across the government. It is not clear who is, in fact, running the country. Because it seems the President is either unable or unwilling to control Musk. Either way, Americans will be paying the price.

To be honest, it's also not clear why the Committee would hold a hearing on cyber workforce at this time. Make no mistake, addressing cyber workforce challenges is a critical security priority. But holding a hearing on cyber workforce while letting Elon Musk root around in government systems is like worrying someone might break in through the back door of your home while swinging your front door wide open.

I am afraid the Committee is failing to address this urgent security issue, and our adversaries — like China, Russia, and Iran — are watching the administration do nothing. Having said that, I would be remiss if I did not point out that one of the biggest obstacles to growing a robust cyber workforce are the Trump-Musk polices. As I speak, the Federal workforce is in tailspin.

President Trump's nominee to lead the Office of Management and Budget has said: "We want the bureaucrats to be traumatically affected. When they wake up in the morning, we want them to not want to go to work because they are increasingly viewed as the villains... We want to put them in trauma."

Hiring freezes are delaying the onboarding and recruitment of top cyber talent. Secretary Noem, with little explanation, has said she wants to shrink CISA.

Deferred resignation offers the Administration has no authority to issue, accompanied by insults about productivity and warnings of layoffs sends a clear message that the Administration does not value its workforce, is not loyal to it, and does not prioritize developing expertise within government. In short, the workforce is expendable.

Moreover, the President is openly hostile to a diverse workforce that reflects the American people. In just two weeks, he has directed Federal departments and agencies to strip references to diversity from their websites and blamed diversity for a national tragedy.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your commitment to addressing the cyber workforce challenge by expanding scholarships for service for community college, but under these circumstances, who would want to commit to working for the government?

Until the Administration begins to treat its workforce with more respect and turn the page on its cruel and dismissive attitude toward diversity, I cannot support new efforts to tie tuition assistance to employment with the Federal government or an employer the Administration must approve. Despite what the President might think, cyber jobs are Black jobs – and Asian jobs, and Hispanic jobs, and jobs for women.

I wish I were more hopeful that the Committee will work to correct course on the Trump-Musk policies that are causing chaos and undermining security.

Toward that end, today I will introduce two Resolutions of Inquiry to ensure that the Committee has the information necessary to evaluate whether Donald Trump and Elon Musk have adequately considered the security implications of their terrible policies.

The first Resolution of Inquiry directs the Secretary to provide the Committee documents related to security assessments associated with efforts to freeze payments of critical homeland security programs that, among many other things, support cyber workforce training and cybersecurity efforts at the state and local level.

The second Resolution of Inquiry directs the Secretary to provide the Committee documents related to the impact of the hiring freeze on the cyber workforce as well as any of the security policies related to providing DOGE access to DHS information systems and data.

Additionally, today Committee Democrats are sending a letter to OPM requesting information about the impact of President Trump's hiring freeze and deferred resignation offers on the cyber workforce and a letter to OMB raising our grave concerns about Elon Musk's unfettered access to Federal networks and Americans' data.

This information is necessary to the Committee's oversight obligations, and Democrats will not stand by idly while the Trump-Musk Administration rips off the American people.

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[Media contact](#)