

Robbing Peter to pay for Elon's tax cuts

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Elon Musk will never need to look to the federal government for Social Security benefits, to apply for a student loan, file a disability claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs, or seek services because his child has a disability. Neither will President Donald Trump. But that's not true for most Americans.

Forty percent of America's 9.5 million Social Security beneficiaries each year rely on the agency's phone service to access those benefits. About 45 million Americans have student loans they need serviced and sorted out. Americans depend on these and other critical services that federal workers provided before the so-called Department of Government Efficiency chainsaw came after them.

Every bureaucracy (and corporation, nonprofit, school, etc.) can be more efficient. But there is a huge difference between efficiency and evisceration. Americans didn't vote for deep and indiscriminate cuts to services we rely on—and our taxes pay for.

Trump has empowered Musk to plunder programs that help the hungry, the poor, students, veterans, the sick, the elderly and the disabled. And if you're not on that list, you're still at risk. They are slashing things that concern us all—aviation safety, food inspections, control of nuclear waste, efforts to combat terrorism, research to cure deadly diseases, and tracking contagions like bird flu and the growing measles outbreak. That's not targeting "fraud, waste and abuse," despite Musk's claims. That's harming our well-being.

Trump promised that on "day one" he would make living costs go down. But the only things going down right now are the stock market and consumer confidence, as Trump's erratic tariffs against our allies have plunged our economy into uncertainty. Even the pro-business *Wall Street Journal* editorial board called Trump's actions "the dumbest trade war in history."

Trump has pledged he would not cut Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security. But last week, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said that Republicans can't fund Trump's tax cuts and immigration crackdown without cutting the healthcare that tens of millions of Americans rely on through Medicare, Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program. Musk has the nerve to call Social Security, which

Americans pay into throughout their working lives, a "Ponzi scheme."

Trump's massive cuts to the Department of Education are a direct assault on our children and their education. States and local school boards control schools but rely on federal funds to level up education. These cuts will rip away services and support from 7.4 million students with disabilities, 10 million students who need federal aid to go to college or pursue a trade, 26 million students from low-income families who benefit from Title I funding to improve achievement, and 9.8 million students in rural schools with limited local tax bases. Schools will be forced to cut vital services for students, or communities will have to raise local taxes to pay for them.

Americans didn't vote for deep cuts to services that we need—and our taxes pay for.

Americans oppose these assaults on the education students need and deserve, and 63 percent oppose Trump's plan to eliminate the Education Department. On March 4, parents, students, teachers and others participated in more than 2,000 events during the AFT's Protect Our Kids Day of Action to fight back against these senseless attacks on students.

The Trump administration is abandoning the country's long-standing commitment to our veterans—seeking to cut 80,000 jobs at the VA, the agency that provides healthcare, suicide prevention programs and other services for millions of veterans.

So much human suffering. So much progress squandered. And for what? They are betraying working people to pave the way for another round of tax cuts for the rich—robbing Peter to pay for Elon's tax cuts.

The Constitution clearly spells out the powers and responsibilities of the president—to uphold laws and to govern for the good of the country. As James Madison wrote in the *Federalist Papers*, the president does not have the authority of a king.

Americans are protesting this chaos and cruelty across the country, often carrying signs saying things like "This is not normal." It is not normal to promote Teslas on the White House lawn to further enrich the world's richest man. Or to encourage the employees of the Department of Health and Human Services to leave their jobs en masse amid the resurgence of measles and bird flu. It is not normal to shut down innovation and research to find the next cancer cure or safe and beneficial uses of artificial intelligence. It is not normal to abandon longtime allies to cozy up to hostile nations.

I believe Americans will reject the havoc that is being wreaked on our country, but it has already caused generational damage to research, unconscionable harm to innocent people, and unnecessary loss of livelihoods and lives. We the people are better than this. Follow us at [AFT.org](https://www.aft.org) to see what we are doing to change this.



Weingarten with educators, students and parents at an AFT/NYSUT rally to Protect Our Kids on March 4.

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