

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 4, 2025

Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

I write to express concern regarding the continued work of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) and its ongoing engagement with the Department of the Interior (DOI). Given recent inquiries and concerns surrounding DOGE's activities, I believe it is important to clarify the role, personnel, scope of work, previous actions, and future objectives of this initiative on the offices and programs within your purview.

DOGE was established with the intent of streamlining government operations, but has expanded to operationalize widespread reductions across programs, projects, and staff and access protected data sets and systems. While DOGE is primarily composed of software engineers, there remain several unanswered questions regarding its structure and leadership and where these individuals are working throughout the various government agencies.

As the Ranking Member on the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee that has specific responsibility over your department for directing, allocating, and providing oversight of the federal resources provided to you to distribute through the appropriations process, I am alarmed by news reports that these activities are occurring without full transparency and or even forethought. Our Committee cannot do proper oversight or make informed decisions on how to fund government agencies and programs (both the amount of funding needed and what the money should be specifically spent on) without having full transparency into how outside entities control or otherwise influence operations at Interior.

In order to understand the extent of DOGE activities within agencies funded by our subcommittee, please:

- Provide a full list of personnel involved in DOGE, including all special government employees placed within DOI, and their official titles, roles, and position descriptions.
- Describe the decision-making process within DOGE for DOI, how key initiatives are determined, and what part you and your departmental staff play in these actions.
- Provide a list of actions already taken that are attributed to the mission and scope of work of DOGE, what current actions are underway, and what future actions are planned.
- Describe, in detail, the oversight structure of DOGE's activities at DOI and who ensures compliance with federal laws and regulations, such as records retention, conflicts-of-interest, and appropriations.

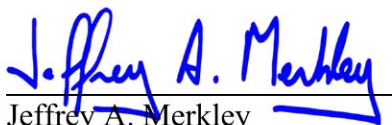
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In addition, we are requesting information related to the security of sensitive personal and business data held by the Department. The Department has a wide range of data that is necessary to carry to its various missions through the offices and bureaus. This includes proprietary business information from companies participating in resource development; royalty payment information for companies, tribes, individual tribal allottees, and others; including other financial data that tribes deem sensitive, a clear violation of data sovereignty principles, and other sensitive personal and business data for individuals and companies that work with the Department. Since we understand the DOGE staff have accessed this type of information at other federal agencies, please provide detailed information on the financial systems, payment systems, and other data collection systems DOGE staff have been provided access, when they were provided access, and whether that access has any restrictions on what can be done with this data.

I insist on cooperation with Congress in a manner that upholds separation-of-powers requirements, adheres to requirements in the law such as reorganizations and reprogrammings, and fosters a government that works more effectively for the American people. As there are continued changes regarding activities at the DOI, I welcome a transparent process, consistent with the law, to address them prior to implementation.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter by replying to the email transmitting this letter and please provide a detailed written response by Tuesday, March 11, 2025. I appreciate your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Department
of the Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate