



Gray Panthers Santa Barbara Network

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April 6, 2025

The Honorable Salud Carbajal
125 East De La Guerra Suite 203B
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Congressman Carbajal :

"Tens of millions of people count on the Social Security Administration (SSA) to reliably deliver benefits they need to pay rent or afford basic household expenses. [2] In recent weeks, however, the Trump Administration— including Elon Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency (or DOGE) — has taken actions that risk creating unprecedented delays, degraded customer service, and unnecessary barriers for millions of beneficiaries to access the benefits they earned. For these primarily older and disabled people, President Trump's repeated insistence that he would not cut Social Security benefits may be a distinction without a difference if his Administration's actions delay benefits or make it harder to get them in the first place, regardless of whether the President ever proposed legislative changes to Social Security.

The Administration, Musk, and DOGE have engaged in four types of activities that each present a clear danger to Social Security but together create the potential for significant damage to the program:

- Launching rhetorical attacks on Social Security programs, including false claims of massive fraud — providing a pretext for actions that could undermine eligible beneficiaries' access to benefits.
- Engaging in deep cuts to staffing, new restrictions on phone-based services for the public, and "agency-wide . . . restructuring" and "massive reorganizations" of SSA that are neither well thought-out nor wise — all of which threaten SSA's ability to serve seniors and people with disabilities effectively while providing a potential excuse for privatizing key services.
- Jeopardizing the reliability of SSA's systems, including through the sharp reduction of staff with technical expertise of systems that serve some 73 million people, or 1 in 5 people in the United States, each month.

- Threatening the security of people's personal information by giving untrained DOGE political appointees unprecedented access to sensitive SSA data.

These four dangers . . . compound one another — rather than making improvements that would help Social Security beneficiaries now or in the future. Social Security is highly accurate and efficient — with a payment accuracy rate of 99.7 percent and administrative costs of only 0.5 percent — and has successfully paid benefits for over 85 years. After years of underfunding, SSA needs more staff — not fewer — to give the nation's retirees and people with disabilities the service they deserve.”

Executive Summary, *Trump Administration, DOGE Activities Risk SSA Operations and Security of Personal Data* (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, March 25, 2025).

Thank you for your past support to maintain and strengthen Social Security. And, considering the above, please reassure your constituents that you have and will oppose all attempts by the Trump Administration and DOGE to weaken or undermine the Social Security system. Indeed, if anything, your efforts will help strengthen the Social Security system by hiring more people to assist beneficiaries, ensuring the system's financial viability, and by increasing benefits. We look forward to hearing about your activities in this regard.

The Gray Panthers Santa Barbara Network works to educate, advocate and agitate on behalf of the older adults in Santa Barbara County.

Best Regards,

Gail Marshall, President

