

The LABOR Paper

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AFSCME warns public services are on the chopping block

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — The nation's "public services are on the chopping block" now that the GOP-run Senate installed Russell Vought, author of Republican Donald Trump's infamous "Project 2025" to head the powerful Office of Management and Budget, AFSCME President Lee Saunders warns.

After all, the project not only demands massive cuts in government services and personnel, but it also advocates abolition of government worker unions altogether, leaving workers defenseless against the radical right, which likes to make them its whipping boy and pinata.

"Russell Vought's singular goal for decades has been to gut public services and hand over as much power and influence to billionaires as possible. His confirmation" on a 53-47 party-line vote after an all-night Democratic filibuster against him was broken "signals that everything from Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security to Head Start and veterans' health care is on the chopping block.

"As the architect of Project 2025, Vought made his vindictive agenda abundantly clear: Withhold funding of essential public services, replace federal workers with political loyalists and erase workers' freedoms. He's even ad-

mitted to wanting to traumatize public service workers—our nurses, school bus drivers, corrections officers and others—and have them viewed as villains.

"Vought will now control the purse strings to put politics between our communities and the essential services we all need. And he's already signaled he will disregard Congress and the Constitution to achieve this vision. Let there be no illusions: Vought is an existential threat to the people's government.

"Right now, we can still fight back by making sure that working people organize like never before to protect our jobs, our freedoms and our communities. It starts with signing a union card, talking to our co-workers, and calling our representatives in Congress to demand they stand with us. We cannot and will not let billionaires undo everything public service workers have committed our lives to."

AFSCME and other unions have at least temporarily blocked one Vought scheme in federal court in Boston: A thinly veiled threat to the nation's two million federal workers to take an eight-month buyout, starting at the end of February, or risk being summarily fired, without recourse or reason.

A full federal court hearing on the legality

of Vought's plan was scheduled for February 10. It's being implemented — at the orders of Republican President Donald Trump's puppeteer, multibillionaire Elon Musk and his so-called "Department of Government Efficiency." It's also drawn voluminous daily protests over, especially, a massive invasion of all Americans' privacy.

AFL-CIO launches 'Dept. of People who Work for a Living'

By Mark Gruenberg, PAI Staff Writer

WASHINGTON (PAI) — In light-hearted, but serious, razzing of puppet President Donald Trump and his puppeteer, multibillionaire Elon Musk, the AFL-CIO launched a new department, whimsically named the "Department Of People Who Work For A Living."

"If Elon Musk can make up his own government department, so can workers," the federation explained in its announcement.

The razzing occurs because Trump, the felonious Republican president, named Musk, the labor-law-breaking worker-hating plutocrat, to head a "Department Of Government Efficiency," or DOGE.

DOGE's mission, which it's carrying out heavily-handedly, is to cut the federal budget by cutting people, halting programs and literally shutting down one agency, padlocking the doors of the U.S. Agency for International Development, which Congress created 63 years ago to disburse foreign development aid.

DOGE padlocked USAID on February 3 — not even letting lawmakers enter and physically throwing people out. DOGE's next target was going to be the entire Labor Department, and unions rallied there February 5, to protect it. Musk canceled, prompting shouts of "Chickenshit!" and "Coward!"

Musk's threat to DOL is even more important to workers. DOL enforces overtime pay and minimum wage laws, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the mine safety act, workplace standards laws, employee benefit laws, pension laws, whistleblower laws and more.

Take DOL watchdogs away and the corporate class can run roughshod over workers' rights, protections, safety and pay.

Trump also effectively neutered the National Labor Relations Board. It now lacks enough members to operate, and has no permanent AFL-CIO

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AFL-CIO

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General Counsel to enforce the law. The head of its Los Angeles office has the GC job, temporarily. Gwynne Wilcox, the NLRB member Trump fired and a former Service Employees counsel, is suing Trump for doing so illegally. Her term expires in August 2028.

The federation’s department will track and publicize all of DOGE’s abuses, President Liz Shuler says.

“The government can work for billionaires or it can work for working people—but not both,” Shuler explained. “Elon is just getting started.

“He already tried to force workers doing essential services — including the FAA air traffic controllers even after the tragedy at Washington National Airport — to retire, gained access to the Treasury Department’s payment system with everyone’s private data, and is declaring entire government agencies like USAID shut down and blocking workers from accessing the building and their e-mail.

“We will hold DOGE and Elon Musk accountable because we are certain the people who keep our food and medicine safe know more about how to make government efficient than an outsider whose companies benefit from the very agencies he is infiltrating.”

DOGE, Shuler said, is “an unaccountable pseudo-government department supposedly created to make the federal government work more efficiently—but for whom? Ideas floated by the DOGE so far would slash government services working people depend on.”

“Everything seems to be on the chopping block,” including Social Security and Medicare, “except the government contracts and programs that personally benefit Musk,” she added.

To track it, the AFL-CIO’s new department “will report on proposed DOGE cuts and their impact on working people. It will provide its own recommendations for how the government can work more efficiently, proposed by the people who are the backbone of America’s economy: America’s workers.”

It’ll also step in where Congress is timid

to tread. The Republican-run House has formed a “DOGE Caucus,” with all Republicans plus Rep. Steven Horsford, D-Nev., a former top official with Unite HERE Culinary Workers Local 226. Reps. Val Hoyle, D-Ore. and Jared Moskowitz, D-Fla. are also in the caucus, but questioning — given Musk’s activities — its purpose.

“The caucus is about focusing on rooting out waste, fraud and abuse. I joined in good faith and to make sure that we have a voice at the table to protect my constituents,” Horsford told Politico.

Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., talked a decent game at an anti-Musk rally on February 4 — but didn’t say how he’d gum up the works to prevent Musk’s depredations.

“Working people have seen this movie be-

fore: So-called efficiency experts who come into the workplace without background knowledge and cut the workforce to make more profit,” Shuler said.

“That model might work in the private sector, but government services aren’t lines on a spreadsheet — they have real world impacts on actual people in communities across the country.

“The Department of People Who Work for a Living will look out for the interests of hardworking taxpayers and the people who make our government and economy run,” said Shuler. She pledged it will defend benefits that aid millions of people, such as Medicare, Medicaid and VA benefits.

“Policymakers in Congress and the White House will be presented with stark choices between these departments, and they will have to show the world which side they are on.”

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