

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 16, 2025

The Honorable Frank Bisignano  
Commissioner  
Social Security Administration  
6401 Security Blvd.  
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Commissioner Bisignano:

We write to you with deep concern about recent reports that the Social Security Administration (SSA) is planning to re-categorize thousands of SSA workers—including frontline employees who work directly with seniors to make sure they get the benefits they have earned—as Schedule F “policy-making” employees.<sup>1</sup> This will endanger the Social Security program by stripping these employees of their civil service protections, making it easier for the Department of Governmental Efficiency (DOGE) to replace hardworking, non-political federal workers with DOGE lackeys intent on making back-door cuts to Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI)—and to slash the SSA workforce more broadly.

Converting these SSA employees’ status is a deliberate maneuver to make it easier to get rid of critical SSA staff, endangering the program and the benefits earned by millions of Americans. On April 18, 2025, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) proposed “Schedule F” as a new category of government employee.<sup>2</sup> Schedule F employees are those that have “important policy-determining, policy-making, policy-advocating, or confidential duties.”<sup>3</sup> Schedule F workers are employed at-will, meaning they can be fired at any point, and do not have the same rights that protect federal government employees from termination absent “misconduct, neglect of duty, [and] malfeasance.”<sup>4</sup> Additionally, it is not clear that Schedule F employees are included in collective bargaining units or eligible for union representation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NPR, “Thousands of federal workers would be easier to fire under Trump rule change,” Shannon Bond, April 18, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/04/18/nx-s1-5369550/trump-federal-workers-schedule-f>; Government Executive, “Dudek calls for entire SSA offices to be converted to new Schedule F,” Erich Wagner, April 22, 2025, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/04/dudek-calls-entire-ssa-offices-be-converted-new-schedule-f/404755/>.

<sup>2</sup> NPR, “Thousands of federal workers would be easier to fire under Trump rule change,” Shannon Bond, April 18, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/04/18/nx-s1-5369550/trump-federal-workers-schedule-f>.

<sup>3</sup> The White House, “Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Creates New Federal Employee Category to Enhance Accountability,” April 18, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/04/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-creates-new-federal-employee-category-to-enhance-accountability/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*; Just Security, “What Just Happened: Purges at the DOJ and FBI - How Do and Don’t the Civil Service Laws Apply,” Roderick M. Hills, February 14, 2025, <https://www.justsecurity.org/107708/purges-doj-fbi-civil-service-laws/>.

<sup>5</sup> Executive Order 13957, “Executive Order on Creating Schedule F In The Excepted Service,” President Donald J. Trump, October 21, 2020, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/10/26/2020-23780/creating-schedule-f-in-the-excepted-service>.

SSA leadership has interpreted the “important policy-determining” language in President Trump’s executive order to apply to a large swath of SSA employees, including “all senior executives, senior leaders and GS-14 and GS-15 senior advisors...the entire Office of the Commissioner... the Office of the Chief Information Officer; the offices of Appellate Operations, Disability Determinations, Hearings Operations and Quality Review within the Office of Disability Adjudication... several components within the Office of External Affairs, Office of General Counsel and the Office of Mission Support.”<sup>6</sup> In practice, this means that SSA has reclassified tens of thousands of employees—including those who ensure recipients get their monthly benefits—as high-level decision-making “Schedule F” employees.

SSA’s broad reclassification of employees under seemingly false pretenses appears to be a deliberate effort to allow DOGE to purge SSA of the employees who work dutifully to make sure Americans receive their earned benefits. Since President Trump’s inauguration, the administration, led by Elon Musk, has been hellbent on dismantling SSA—which he has called a “Ponzi scheme.”<sup>7</sup> He has repeatedly—and falsely—claimed that SSA is full of fraud, even going so far as to endorse a claim that SSA employees should be in prison.<sup>8</sup> He has infiltrated the agency with his closest allies and pushed out anyone who has been willing to defend Americans and their Social Security benefits. Indeed, Mr. Dudek’s appointment as Acting Commissioner was the result of his predecessor’s refusal to give Mr. Musk and DOGE access to Americans’ sensitive data.<sup>9</sup> When he was serving as Acting Commissioner, Mr. Dudek reiterated Mr. Musk’s anti-SSA sentiments, posting that he “bullied [SSA] executives, shared executive contact information, and circumvented the chain of command to connect DOGE with the people who get stuff done.”<sup>10</sup>

Despite your public efforts to distance yourself from DOGE, it seems you have been a willing enabler—allegedly lying to Ranking Member Wyden and the American people about your involvement with DOGE. Despite publicly shying away from DOGE, you “frequently spoke with senior SSA executives...requested senior SSA executives to not hire anyone without [your] explicit approval...and was personally briefed on key SSA operations, personnel, and management decisions.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The White House, “Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Creates New Federal Employee Category to Enhance Accountability,” April 18, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/04/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-creates-new-federal-employee-category-to-enhance-accountability/>; Government Executive, “Dudek calls for entire SSA offices to be converted to new Schedule F,” Erich Wagner, April 22, 2025, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/04/dudek-calls-entire-ssa-offices-be-converted-new-schedule-f/404755/>.

<sup>7</sup> NBC News, “Trump allies press the White House to dial back Elon Musk’s media interviews over his Social Security jabs,” Kristen Walker, Allan Smith, Yamiche Alcindor, and Matt Dixon, March 23, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-administration/elon-musk-social-security-concern-trump-allies-rcna197527>.

<sup>8</sup> New York Times, “‘Just a Mess’: Staff Cuts, Rushed Changes and Anxiety at Social Security,” Jack Healy, Alexandra Berzon, Tara Siegel Bernard, and Nicholas Nehamas, April 8, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/08/us/social-security-trump.html>; Post on X from Elon Musk, April 25, 2025, <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1915644940794597546?s=12>.

<sup>9</sup> NBC News, “Top Social Security official steps down after disagreement with DOGE over sensitive data,” Yamiche Alcindor and Raquel Coronell Uribe, February 17, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/doge/top-social-security-official-steps-disagreement-doge-sensitive-data-rcna192530>; CNN, “How a mid-level staffer rose to oversee the Social Security Administration within days,” Tami Luhby, February 22, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/22/politics/leland-dudek-acting-social-security-head-doge/index.html>.

<sup>10</sup> ProPublica, “‘The President Wanted It and I Did It’: Recording Reveals Head of Social Security’s Thoughts on DOGE and Trump,” Eli Hager, March 12, 2025, <https://www.propublica.org/article/recording-reveals-leland-dudek-thoughts-trump-doge-social-security>.

The broad reclassification of thousands of SSA employees into Schedule F will make it easier for you and the Trump administration to oust hardworking, rank-and-file federal employees who work to fulfill the statutory mandate of the SSA: providing people their benefits. Using Schedule F, you can replace anyone who refuses DOGE's potentially illegal orders that cut Americans off from Social Security or endanger their sensitive personal information with employees who, like you, have pledged your loyalty to President Trump and DOGE. By indiscriminately making senior officers and rank-and-file employees at will, you are politicizing Social Security. Americans receiving their *earned* benefits is not a political call—it is a right.

But the reclassification does not just apply to senior leadership and policy-makers. The former Acting Commissioner, Leland Dudek, announced that SSA would reclassify broad swaths of the SSA workforce, such that even frontline workers making as little as \$40,000,<sup>12</sup>—those responsible for the routine but critical work of ensuring Americans receive their benefits every month—are Schedule F. This means that—in addition to replacing long-serving employees with your DOGE acolytes—you can cut large swaths of the SSA workforce to effectuate DOGE's goal of slashing the agency. In the first months of the Trump Administration, Elon Musk called SSA the “big one” to cut and it was reported that the agency could be cut to just half of its existing size.<sup>13</sup> Already, SSA has announced plans to reduce the workforce by 7,000 people—78% of whom worked in field offices in customer-facing roles, and further reductions are reportedly in the works.<sup>14</sup> This broad reclassification will enable you—at DOGE's behest—to slash the SSA workforce while stripping protections that typically apply to federal workers.

This is just the latest of DOGE's efforts to cut Social Security and SSI benefits or prevent seniors and people with disabilities from obtaining the benefits they have earned. Even before you took over SSA, beneficiaries under the Trump administration have struggled to access their Social Security benefits, faced hours-long lines at SSA offices, extended wait times on the phone lines, and repeated SSA.gov website crashes.<sup>15</sup> Some Americans have even been wrongly cut off from their benefits, threatening their ability to pay their bills.<sup>16</sup> Even missing one benefit payment would leave six million Americans unable to cover basic living expenses.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Letter from Whistleblower to Ranking Member Ron Wyden, March 24, 2025, [https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ssa\\_whistleblower\\_statement.pdf](https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ssa_whistleblower_statement.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Government Executive, “Dudek calls for entire SSA offices to be converted to new Schedule F,” Erich Wagner, April 22, 2025, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/04/dudek-calls-entire-ssa-offices-be-converted-new-schedule-f/404755/>.

<sup>13</sup> Bloomberg, “Musk Says Entitlements ‘Big One’ to Cut in Trump's DOGE Push,” Gregory Korte, March 11, 2025, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-03-10/musk-calls-entitlements-the-big-one-to-cut-counter-trump?srnd=ai-jobs-economy>.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Senator Elizabeth Warren to Social Security Administration Acting Commissioner Leland Dudek, April 13, 2025, [https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/letter\\_to\\_ssa\\_on\\_ocio\\_layoffs.pdf](https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/letter_to_ssa_on_ocio_layoffs.pdf); CNN, “Social Security Administration aims to cut about 7,000 jobs, prompting fears of customer service impact,” Tami Tuhby, February 28, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/28/politics/social-security-job-cuts-doge/index.html>.

<sup>15</sup> New York Times, “‘Just a Mess’: Staff Cuts, Rushed Changes and Anxiety at Social Security,” Jack Healy, Alexandra Berzon, Tara Siegel Bernard, and Nicholas Nehamas, April 8, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/08/us/social-security-trump.html>; Letter from Senator Elizabeth Warren to Social Security Administration Acting Commissioner Leland Dudek, April 7, 2025, [https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/warren\\_letter\\_to\\_dudek\\_re\\_ssi.pdf](https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/warren_letter_to_dudek_re_ssi.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> CBS News, “Social Security wrongly told disabled people and some seniors their benefits ended, causing alarm,” Aimee Picchi, April 8, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/social-security-doge-ssi-error-message-currently-not-receiving-payments/>; Fox News, “SEN ELIZABETH WARREN: Social Security is under attack. Gutting it is a broken promise,” Senator Elizabeth Warren, April 15, 2025, <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/sen-elizabeth-warren-social-security-under-attack-gutting-broken-promise>.

Converting SSA employees to Schedule F will enable President Trump, Elon Musk, and DOGE to stack the SSA with lackeys willing to implement policies aimed at restricting Americans' access to their benefits, while firing the hardworking frontline workers who make sure recipients get their monthly check. In other words, this will enable DOGE and the Trump administration to continue its crusade to cut Social Security benefits. We urge you to halt re-classifying SSA employees as Schedule F, revert employees currently classified as Schedule F to their previous classifications, and respond to the following questions by May 29, 2025:

1. Prior to your confirmation as Commissioner, how many SSA employees were classified under Schedule F?
  - a. How many of those employees are currently based in Baltimore, MD or Washington, DC?
  - b. How many of those employees' duties include the provision of individuals' benefits?
  - c. How many of those employees interact directly with beneficiaries, either in field offices, on the phone, or in adjudications?
  - d. How many of those employees' work on SSA's online portal, my Social Security (mySSA)?
2. How many SSA employees do you plan to classify as Schedule F?
  - a. How many of those employees are currently based in Baltimore, MD or Washington, DC?
  - b. How many of those employees' duties include the provision of individuals' benefits?
  - c. How many of those employees interact directly with beneficiaries, either in field offices, on the phone, or in adjudications?
  - d. How many of those employees' work on SSA's online portal, mySSA?
3. What is the intent of classifying these employees as Schedule F, including for employees that are not in policy-making positions?
4. Has the agency conducted analyses to determine the impact on employee retention of the rescheduling of these employees? If so, what did these analyses show? Please provide these analyses.
5. Have you received an opinion from the agency's General Counsel regarding whether it is legally appropriate to reclassify these employees? If so, what did this analysis show? Please provide a copy of this analysis.
6. For each of the divisions below, please explain how employees in that division have "important policy-determining, policy-making, policy-advocating, or confidential duties" and warrant being placed under excepted service.<sup>18</sup>

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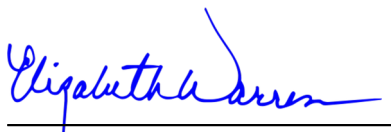
<sup>17</sup> Urban Institute, "Disruptions to Social Security Checks Would Leave 6 Million Beneficiaries Unable to Make Ends Meet," Richard W. Johnson and Jonathan Schwabish, April 29, 2025, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/disruptions-social-security-checks-would-leave-6-million-beneficiaries-unable-make-ends>.

<sup>18</sup> The White House, "Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Creates New Federal Employee Category to Enhance Accountability," April 18, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/04/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-creates->

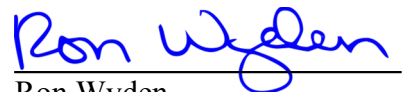
- a. Office of Operations, which oversees SSA's network of over 1,200 field offices and the National 1-800 Number in processing benefit claims established under federal statute, regulations, and SSA policy, and assisting members of the public apply and access Social Security and SSI benefits.
- b. Office of the Chief Information Officer, which manages SSA's IT infrastructure, including the mySSA portal.<sup>19</sup>
- c. Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics, which collects and disseminates statistical data on the Social Security program benefits, payments, covered workers, and other indicators.
- d. Office of Hearings Operations, which reviews individuals' appeals and applies the SSA's existing laws, regulations, policies, and rulings established by Congress, the Administration, Federal courts, and SSA leadership.
- e. Office of Appellate Operations, which reviews the hearing decisions of the Office of Hearings Operations by applying the SSA's existing rules and regulations.
- f. Office of Quality Review, which conducts broad reviews of agency practices, as well as reviews of medical determinations made by state Disability Determination Services and SSA components for consistency with laws, regulations, policies, and rulings established by appropriate authorities such as Congress, the Administration, Federal courts, and SSA leadership.<sup>20</sup>
- g. Office of Disability Adjudications, which oversees the Disability Determinations and appeals process at all levels.<sup>21</sup>
- h. Office of Mission Support, which assists the Commissioner with running the agency such as running the agency's human resources and contracts procurement offices.<sup>22</sup>

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member, Committee  
on Finance

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[new-federal-employee-category-to-enhance-accountability/](#).

<sup>19</sup> Social Security, "Organizational Structure of the Social Security Administration," <https://www.ssa.gov/org/orgOCIO.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Social Security Administration, "Office of Quality Review," <https://www.ssa.gov/org/orgOARO.htm#oqr1>.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Social Security Administration, "Hearings and Appeals," <https://www.ssa.gov/appeals/>; LawHelp.org/DC, "Office of Disability Adjudication and Review," <https://www.lawhelp.org/dc/resource/office-of-disability-adjudication-and-review>.

<sup>22</sup> YouTube, "Office of Mission Support," U.S. Social Security Administration, March 31, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n16XS0IK34w#:~:text=Office%20of%20Mission%20Support%20%2D%20YouTube.gov/ab>.

*Kirsten Gillibrand*

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Kirsten Gillibrand

United States Senator