

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** *Published June 9, 2026 · 3 minute read*

# The DOGE Time Bombs

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The Trump Administration's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), led by Elon Musk, took an unprecedented and dangerous approach to downsizing the federal government—one that put speed, ideology, and disruption over consequences, institutional knowledge, and public safety. Unlike the successful Clinton–Gore “Reinventing Government” initiative, DOGE’s “move fast and break things” mentality set up government to fail and left behind a litany of “DOGE time bombs” that could go off in the future.

The Clinton-era reform model—data-driven and staffed by experienced civil servants—was focused on improving how government fulfills its missions and improved public trust in the federal government over his presidency. DOGE’s short-term, politically driven effort staffed largely by inexperienced private-sector personnel failed to deliver improvements in federal services and quickly became a political liability with the public.

One year later, here are 6 potentially ticking DOGE time bombs that could affect the American people:

- **Social Security:** DOGE-driven workforce cuts increased call wait times, delayed disability determinations, and closed field offices relied upon by seniors without internet access. More alarmingly, DOGE staff sought—and ultimately gained—access to the Social Security Administration’s full database of sensitive personal information, later uploading it to a vulnerable cloud server, raising the specter of mass identity theft and national security exploitation. The most valuable and personal database in the world could be in the hands of scammers, political opportunists, or foreign adversaries.
- **Electricity reliability and affordability:** DOGE cancelled \$3.7 billion in clean energy demonstration grants, dismantled the Department of Energy’s Grid Deployment Office, and halted hundreds of grid resilience projects. These actions came just as electricity prices spiked and surging demand from AI data centers put added demand on an unprepared aging grid.
- **Air travel safety:** An already understaffed air safety corps was depleted further by many accepting DOGE buyouts. DOGE-related downsizing eliminated critical support staff, including maintenance mechanics, medical certifiers, and communications specialists. 2025 saw record-breaking flight delays, cancellations, tarmac waits, and unprecedented levels of disruption attributable to the National Aviation System. At best, DOGE cuts have made passenger air travel more frustrating and time consuming.
- **Disaster response:** Staffing chaos at NOAA left weather stations understaffed and reduced weather balloon launches, weakening storm forecasting ahead of deadly storms. At FEMA, buyouts, reassignments, and new approval bottlenecks slowed disaster response to a crawl, contributing to failures during the 2025 Texas floods

when call centers collapsed and search-and-rescue teams arrived days late. When minutes matter, U.S. disaster response is appreciably slower.

- **Public health and biomedical research:** Mass layoffs at NIH, CDC, and FDA disrupted scientific capacity, while the cancellation of \$500 million in mRNA research projects undermined future disease preparedness. Political interference in vaccine policy has brought measles outbreaks to Texas, South Carolina, and other states. Viruses aren't swayed by political spin.
- **Counterterrorism:** Reductions in intelligence and law enforcement staffing, combined with the reassignment of personnel to immigration enforcement, weaken the nation's ability to detect and prevent terrorist threats. Whatever one thinks about diversity, equity and inclusion, a dangerous world demands people who can speak and blend in with other cultures. As intelligence experts warn, the consequences of these cuts may only become apparent after a catastrophic failure.

Reform that ignores institutional capacity and public purpose can inflict lasting harm on the nation it claims to protect. Reforms that are pursued in the name of savings to the national purse turn out to be negligible while the potential costs are astronomic.

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