



March 21, 2025

Douglas A. Collins
Acting Director
U.S. Office of Government Ethics
250 E Street, SW., Suite 750
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Acting Director Collins:

The Project On Government Oversight (POGO) requests that the Office of Government Ethics investigate the continued violation of federal ethics laws prohibiting acts affecting a government official's personal financial interests, preferential treatment, and use of public office for private gain, including the endorsement of products or services.¹ POGO is a nonpartisan independent watchdog that investigates and exposes waste, corruption, abuse of power, and when the government fails to serve the public or silences those who report wrongdoing. We champion reforms to achieve a more effective, ethical, and accountable federal government that safeguards constitutional principles.

On March 11, 2025, Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla and a special government employee who is subject to ethics laws, promoted Tesla vehicles while at the White House.² This was followed on March 19, 2025, by Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick appearing on television, stating that the public should "buy Tesla" stock.³ According to news reports, Lutnick's former company, Cantor Fitzgerald, now run by his children, held approximately 740,000 shares of Tesla stock in 2024 and had "upgraded" the stock on Wednesday.⁴ Both instances of endorsement are blatant violations of using one's official government position for private gain.

Federal ethics laws are one of the safeguards we have to ensure public confidence in the integrity of government programs and operations. These public endorsements by senior government officials violate numerous ethics and conflict of interest laws and regulations, and Musk and Lutnick must be held accountable.

¹ 18 U.S.C. § 208 (2025), <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/208>; 5 CFR § 2635.101(b)(1), (2), (7), and (8) (2025), <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/5/2635.101>; 5 CFR § 2635.702(c) (2025), <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/5/2635.702>.

² Chris Megerian, "Trump selects a new Tesla on White House driveway to show support for Elon Musk," AP, March 11, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-musk-tesla-9a43c57a0591a4c7ed8d3f1b2c7ef8d9>.

³ Ben Berkowitz, "Tesla falls after Commerce secretary recommends buying stock," *Axios*, March 20, 2025, <https://www.axios.com/2025/03/20/tesla-musk-lutnick>.

⁴ Edith Olmsted, "White House Press Sec. Goes on Bonkers Rant When Asked About Tesla," *The New Republic*, March 20, 2025, <https://newrepublic.com/post/192985/donald-trump-karoline-leavitt-commerce-tesla>.

We appreciate your consideration of this matter and your commitment to improving ethics throughout the executive branch. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please contact me or Scott Amey at 202-347-1122.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danielle Brian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Danielle" being more prominent than the last name "Brian".

Danielle Brian
President and Executive Director