

THE COMPLICATIONS OF ELON MUSK

You might be forgiven for forgetting that, just over a week ago, Trump's spox, Karoline Leavitt, issued a statement affirming that Trump – and not Elon Musk – leads the Republican party.

As soon as President Trump released his official stance on the CR, Republicans on Capitol Hill echoed his point of view. President Trump is the leader of the Republican Party. Full stop.

She was trying to sustain the illusion that Trump *really did* only learn about the contents of the Continuing Resolution that Elon Musk tanked after Elon did, rather than that Elon vetoed a bill Trump had already acquiesced to.

Read Robert Kuttner on the ways that Elon outplayed Trump in the CR negotiations (though I think Elon had several goals, not just to continue doing business in China unimpeded, but also defeating a measure that would have limited his ability to post Deep Fakes of AOC on Xitter).

You might be forgiven for forgetting Leavitt's thin denial because Trump's own comments, at Turning Point USA's latest shindig, were even more striking.

Elon is going to have his DOGE [sic], Trump recommitted. But he's not going to be President, Trump continued, because he is Constitutionally prohibited.

But I will order federal workers to get back to the office in person or be terminated from the job immediately. And we will create the new Department of Government Efficiency, headed by Elon Musk.

And no, he's not taking the presidency. I like having smart people. You know,

the – they’re on a new kick – Russia, Russia, Russia, Ukraine, Ukraine, Ukraine, all the different hoaxes. And the new one is, President Trump has ceded the presidency to Elon Musk. No, no, that’s not happening. But Elon’s done an amazing job. Isn’t it nice to have smart people that we can rely on, okay? Don’t we want that?

[snip]

But no, he’s not going to be president, that I can tell you. And I’m safe. You know why? He can’t be. He wasn’t born in this country. But the fake news knows that. No, he’s a great guy, and we want to have him, everybody.

Pretty rich [cough] for a guy like Trump to seek refuge in the Constitution.

The next day, Trump put Stephen Miller’s spouse, Katie on DOGE [sic], right alongside naming another billionaire, Stephen Feinberg, to serve as Deputy Secretary of Defense.

We learned during the campaign that the relationship between Stephen Miller and Musk is chummier than we knew, though we still can’t say whether Miller was the one who counseled Musk on bringing “the boss himself, if you’re up for that!” back onto Xitter.

2022-04-04 08:52:30 (CDT)	Congratulations! The above article was laying out some of the things that might happen: Step 1: Blame the platform for its users Step 2. Coordinated pressure campaign Step 3: Exodus of the Bluechecks Step 4: Deplatforming "But it will not be easy. It will be a war. Let the battle begin."
2022-04-04 09:07:32 (CDT)	It will be a delicate game of letting right wingers back on Twitter and how to navigate that (especially the boss himself, if you're up for that) I would also lay out the standards early but have someone who has a savvy cultural/political view to be the VP of actual enforcement
2022-04-04 09:08:17 (CDT)	A Blake Masters type

But by picking even the spokesperson for DOGE [sic] – presumably a spox who would like to get paid – Trump provides NGOs like CREW a lever to demand transparency into DOGE [sic] that it is otherwise designed to evade.

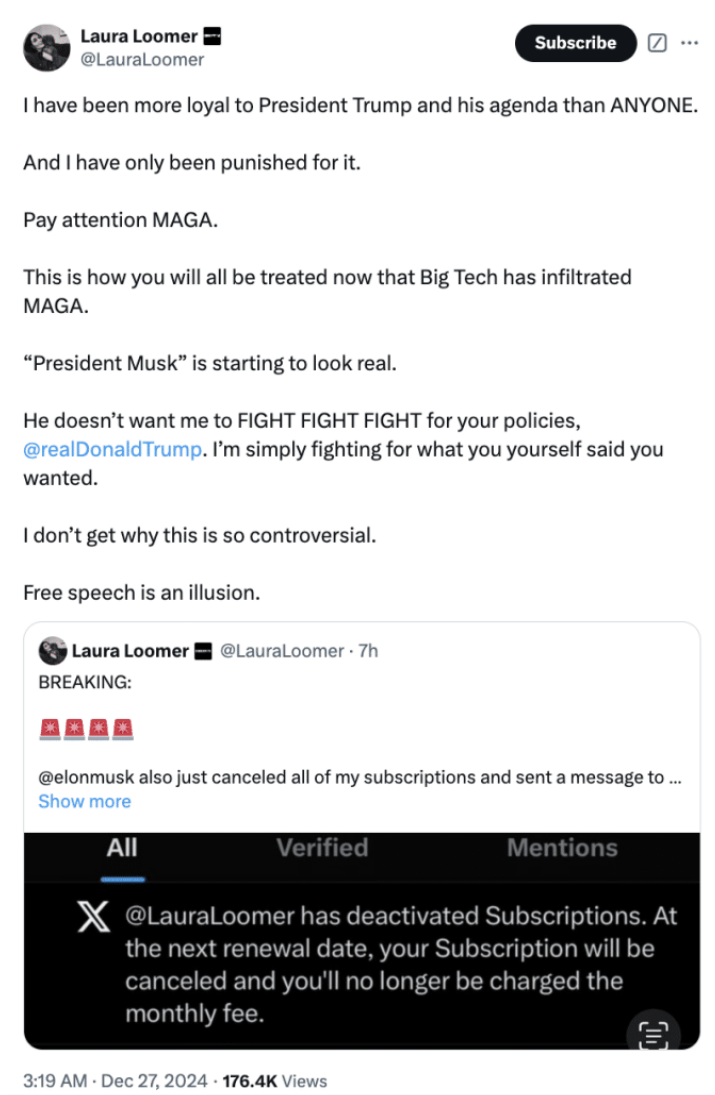
It also puts a trusted insider inside.

All that was before the hilarious fight between Laura Loomer and Elon Musk (and Vivek Ramaswamy,

who suggested American children don't have the same work ethic that children of South Asian immigrants do) over H1Bs yesterday. After Loomer called Musk out for pushing immigration, Elon started shutting down her Xitter privileges.



Which led to Elon "censoring" Loomer's account, after which she herself adopted the "President Musk" moniker.



Then someone with a manic South African accent using the name Adrian Dittman went into an Owen Shroyer chatroom and further antagonized Loomer.

Perhaps this is all some light-hearted amusement – something to do between the Beyoncé halftime show and the New Years Eve ball drop.

But I do think it's a testament to the complexity of the relationship between Trump and Elon. And that's true for more reasons than the fundamental incompatibility of Trump's populist nativism and Elon's supranational aspirations. As it happened, the CR disappointed almost three dozen Republicans, who took Trump's promise of backing Elon's plans to cut government seriously. But it also disappointed Trump, who didn't get Republicans to eliminate the debt ceiling. And those two incompatible stances – cutting government spending versus eliminating all limits to it – are simply two unpopular ways of giving the richest man in the world more tax cuts.

Many people predict, with good reason, that the two Malignant Narcissist problem will soon lead to a break between the men – that Trump will tire of questions about his own authority and lash out, cut off Elon, maybe even retaliate. The more people call Elon the President, the more likely that will happen.

But I'm not convinced that fully accounts for the complexity of this relationship. I don't know whether that's because Trump is awed by Elon's shiny rockets and endless money. Or if there's further complexity to the way Trump won the election.

It should be the case that Trump, through no more than inaction, a failure to order subordinates to shut down the various investigations and regulatory reviews that threaten Musk, could eliminate the problem Elon poses to his authority.

But Trump has already allowed Elon to chip away at the viability of his coalition.