

Busted: Emails show Trump admin targeted state's Social Security as political revenge

Story by Brett Wilkins, Common Dreams

The top Democrat on the U.S. House Oversight Committee on Wednesday led calls for the resignation of acting Social Security Administration Commissioner Leland Dudek following the revelation of internal emails confirming that the SSA canceled contracts with the state of Maine as political payback after Democratic Gov. Janet Mills publicly defied President [Donald Trump](#) in support of transgender student athletes.

The emails—which were obtained by House Oversight Committee Ranking Member Gerry Connolly (D-Va.)—show that Dudek ordered the cancellation of enumeration at birth and electronic death registration contracts with Maine, even though SSAd subordinates warned that such action "would result in improper payments and potential for identity theft."

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Dudek—who is leading the SSA while the Senate considers Trump's [nomination](#) of financial services executive Frank Bisignano—replied to the staffer: "Please cancel the contracts. While our improper payments will go up, and fraudsters may compromise identities, no money will go from the public trust to a petulant child."

He was referring to Mills, who [stood up to Trump](#) in February after the president threatened to suspend federal funding for Maine unless the state banned transgender girls and women from participating on female scholastic sports teams.

The termination of the enumeration at birth contract briefly forced Maine parents to register their newborns for a Social Security number at a Social Security office,

rather than checking a box on a form at the hospital as is customary, before the SSA [reversed](#) its decision.

Connolly sent Dudek a [letter](#) demanding that he "resign immediately" and submit to a transcribed interview with House Oversight Committee Democrats. Connolly wrote that Dudek "ordered these contracts terminated" as "direct retaliation" for Mills' defiance, "even though you knew that doing so would increase improper payments and create opportunities for fraudsters."

Government accountability advocates also condemned Dudek's actions.

"These emails confirm that the Trump administration is intentionally creating waste and the opportunity for fraud—in this case, to punish Maine Gov. Janet Mills for not bowing down to Donald Trump," [Social Security Works](#) president Nancy Altman told Common Dreams.

"The people actually punished by these actions were exhausted new parents in Maine, forced to drag their newborns to overcrowded Social Security offices in the middle of a measles outbreak," she continued. "Thankfully, the Trump administration had to quickly reverse course after massive public outrage. But Trump is clearly comfortable weaponizing Social Security for political purposes, and we fear that this is only the beginning."

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Max Richtman, president and CEO of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, told Common Dreams that "it does not surprise us at all that this administration would weaponize Social Security against anyone who disagrees with or challenges President Trump."

"It's one of the concerns that we have with [Elon Musk](#) and [the [Department of Government Efficiency](#)] [having access](#) to everyone's personal data without any defensible explanation for why they need it," he continued. "We and the American people have legitimate worries, not only that this information will be vulnerable to hackers, but also that it could intentionally be misused as a weapon against anyone who publicly disagrees with Trump."

"The fact that the acting commissioner himself publicly admitted that he didn't really understand the Maine contract, but canceled it anyway, proves that this administration is making reckless changes that affect real people for no legitimate reason," Richtman added. "Once again, we see Team Trump resorting to revenge to set domestic policy."

The revelation of Dudek's emails comes amid SSA turmoil caused by the [termination](#) of thousands of agency personnel in what Trump, Musk, and other Republicans claim is an effort to reduce waste and fraud. Musk—who recently [referred to](#) Social Security as the the "biggest Ponzi scheme of all time"—has proposed the elimination of up to 50% of SSA's workforce and has said that up to \$700 billion could be cut from programs including Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.