Judge suggests temporary order blocking DOGE from Treasury records



Further, Humphreys explained that DOGE—which functions as part of the executive office—does not have access, to the DOJ's knowledge. As he explained it, DOGE sets the high-level priorities that these special government employees carry out, seemingly trusting the employees to identify waste and protect taxpayer dollars without ever providing any detailed reporting on the records that supposedly are evidence of mismanagement.

To Kollar-Kotelly, the facts on the record seem to suggest that no one outside the Treasury is currently accessing sensitive data. But when she pressed Humphreys on whether DOGE had future plans to access the data, Humphreys declined to comment, calling it irrelevant to the complaint.

Humphreys suggested that the government's defense in this case

would focus on the complaint that outsiders are currently accessing Treasury data, seemingly dismissing any need to discuss DOGE's future plans. But the judge pushed back, telling Humphreys she was not trying to "nail" him "to the wall," but there's too little information on the relationship between DOGE and the Treasury Department as it stands. How these entities work together makes a difference, the judge suggested, in terms of safeguarding sensitive Treasury data.

According to Kollar-Kotelly, granting a temporary restraining order in part would allow DOGE to "preserve the status quo" of its current work in the Treasury Department while ensuring no new outsiders get access to Americans' sensitive information. Such an order would give both sides time to better understand the current government workflows to best argue their cases, the judge suggested.

A lawyer for groups representing millions of retirees and government workers pushing for a temporary injunction, Nandan Joshi, suggested that the compromise would work for plaintiffs. But Humphreys said he wasn't authorized to agree to anything at the hearing and would have to run it by his clients.

The parties reconvened later in the day but could not agree on the terms of the temporary restraining order.

Kollar-Kotelly urged the parties to reach an agreement Wednesday evening, but it seems likely that instead, the DOJ will file a response to the temporary restraining order motion tomorrow by noon. After that, plaintiffs will have four hours to file their reply ahead of a hearing Friday at 3:30pm, where the judge said she will officially rule on the motion.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2025/02/judge-suggests-temporary-order-blocking-doge-from-treasury-records/

Robocallers posing as FCC staff blocked after robocalling real FCC staff



Robocallers posing as employees of the Federal Communications Commission made the mistake of trying to scam real employees of the FCC, the FCC announced yesterday. “On the night of February 6, 2024, and continuing into the morning of February 7, 2024, over a dozen FCC staff and some of their family members reported receiving calls on their personal and work telephone numbers,” the FCC said.

The calls used an artificial voice that said, “Hello [first name of recipient] you are receiving an automated call from the Federal Communications Commission notifying you the Fraud Prevention Team would like to speak with you. If you are available to speak now please press one. If you prefer to schedule a call back please press two.”

You may not be surprised to learn that the FCC does not have any “Fraud Prevention Team” like the one mentioned in the robocalls, and especially not one that demands Google gift cards in lieu of jail time.

“The FCC’s Enforcement Bureau believes the purpose of the calls was to threaten, intimidate, and defraud,” the agency said. “One recipient of an imposter call reported that they were ultimately connected to someone who ‘demand[ed] that [they] pay the FCC $1,000 in Google gift cards to avoid jail time for [their] crimes against the state.'”

The FCC said it does not “publish or otherwise share staff personal phone numbers” and that it “remains unclear how these individuals were targeted.” Obviously, robocallers posing as FCC employees probably wouldn’t intentionally place scam calls to real FCC employees. But FCC employees are just as likely to get robocalls as anyone else. This set of schemers apparently only made about 1,800 calls before their calling accounts were terminated.

The FCC described the scheme yesterday when it announced a proposed fine of $4,492,500 against Telnyx, the voice service provider accused of carrying the robocalls. The FCC alleges that Telnyx violated “Know Your Customer (KYC)” rules by providing access to calling services without verifying the customers’ identities. When contacted by Ars today, Telnyx denied the FCC’s allegations and said it will contest the proposed fine.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2025/02/robocallers-posing-as-fcc-staff-blocked-after-robocalling-real-fcc-staff/

Internet Archive played crucial role in tracking shady CDC data removals



“These data are public and they are ours,” Rasmussen posted. “Deletion disobedience is one way to fight back.”

As Rasmussen sees it, deleting CDC data is “theft” from the public domain and archiving CDC data is simply taking “back what is ours.” But at the same time, her team is also taking steps to be sure the data they collected can be lawfully preserved. Because the CDC website has not been copied and hosted on a server, they expect their archive should be deemed lawful and remain online.

“I don’t put it past this administration to try to shut this stuff down by any means possible,” Rasmussen told Ars. “And we wanted to make sure there weren’t any sort of legal loopholes that would jeopardize anybody in the group, but also that would potentially jeopardize the data.”

It’s not clear if some data has already been lost. Seemingly the same user who uploaded the deleted datasets to IA posted on Reddit, clarifying that while the “full” archive “should contain all public datasets that were available” before “anything was scrubbed,” it likely only includes “most” of the “metadata and attachments.” So, researchers who download the data may still struggle to fill in some blanks.

To help researchers quickly access the missing data, anyone can help the IA seed the datasets, the Reddit user said in another post providing seeding and mirroring instructions. Currently dozens are seeding it for a couple hundred peers.

“Thank you to everyone who requested this important data, and particularly to those who have offered to mirror it,” the Reddit user wrote.

As Rasmussen works with her group to make their archive more user-friendly, her plan is to help as many researchers as possible fight back against data deletion by continuing to reference deleted data in their research. She suggested that effort—doing science that ignores Trump’s executive orders—is perhaps a more powerful way to resist and defend public health data than joining in loud protests, which many researchers based in the US (and perhaps relying on federal funding) may not be able to afford to do.

“Just by doing things and standing up for science with your actions, rather than your words, you can really make, I think, a big difference,” Rasmussen said.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2025/02/internet-archive-played-crucial-role-in-tracking-shady-cdc-data-removals/

$42B broadband grant program may scrap Biden admin's preference for fiber



Republicans and ISPs have objected to the NTIA's enforcement of the legal mandate that Internet providers receiving federal funds offer at least one "low-cost broadband service option for eligible subscribers." Although this requirement is part of the law that created BEAD, Republicans and ISPs say the Biden NTIA went too far when it urged states to set a fixed rate of $30 per month for the low-cost service option.

At the Federalist Society event, Roth said that "requiring states to choose a state-wide, low-income rate is just one of the ways they've imposed extralegal requirements. There's also climate change regs, union mandates, wholesale access requirements… all kinds of left-wing priorities on the program that divert resources away from the overall goal of closing broadband gaps. This is going to make the program less cost effective and it's going to undermine its goals."

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Brendan Carr, who repeatedly criticized the Biden NTIA's handling of BEAD, said that Roth "will be a terrific leader at NTIA." Roth worked for the FCC during the first Trump administration as a legal adviser in the Wireline Competition Bureau, and later a wireline adviser for Republican FCC Commissioner Michael O'Rielly.

Industry lobby groups want different rules

In the law that created BEAD, Congress defined priority broadband projects as those that "ensure that the network built by the project can easily scale speeds over time to meet the evolving connectivity needs of households and businesses; and support the deployment of 5G, successor wireless technologies, and other advanced services."

The Biden NTIA concluded that end-to-end fiber-optic architecture is the only technology that achieves those goals. "End-to-end fiber networks can be updated by replacing equipment attached to the ends of the fiber-optic facilities, allowing for quick and relatively inexpensive network scaling as compared to other technologies. Moreover, new fiber deployments will facilitate the deployment and growth of 5G and other advanced wireless services, which rely extensively on fiber for essential backhaul," the Biden NTIA said.

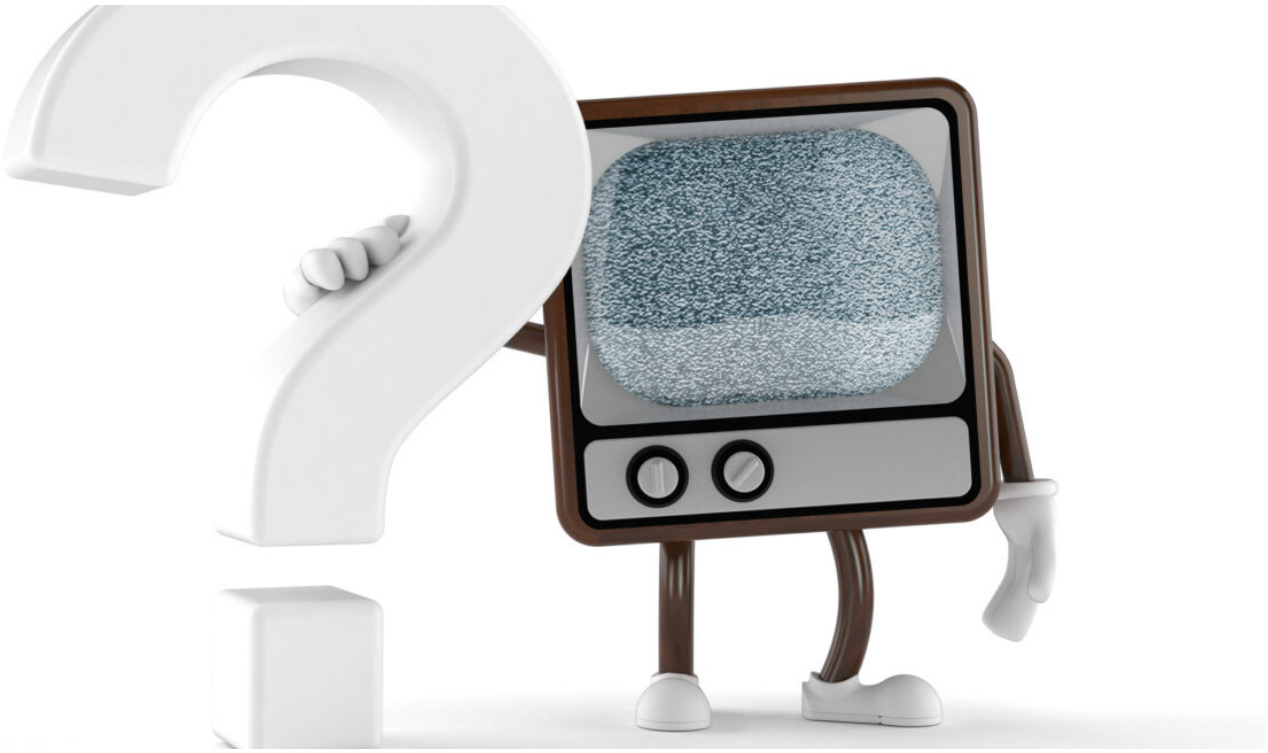
Lobby groups for non-fiber ISPs hope that decision will be reversed, and they welcomed Roth's nomination. "We look forward to working with Arielle as she takes the reins at NTIA, especially to help put the BEAD program on a better and more successful course," said America's Communications Association, a cable lobby group.

The Wireless Internet Service Providers Association said that "Roth's work with Senator Ted Cruz on BEAD is especially

encouraging, illuminating a path to correct that off-track program.” The group said the program’s funding decisions should be “tech-neutral” so that fixed wireless ISPs have a better chance of obtaining grants.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2025/02/trump-picks-ted-cruzs-telecom-chief-to-overhaul-42b-broadband-program/

“Zero warnings”: Longtime YouTuber rails against unexplained channel removal



Artemiy Pavlov, the founder of a small but mighty music software brand called Sinesvibes, spent more than 15 years building a YouTube channel with all original content to promote his business’ products. Over all those years, he never had any issues with YouTube’s automated content removal

system—until Monday, when YouTube, without issuing a single warning, abruptly deleted his entire channel.

“What a ‘nice’ way to start a week!” Pavlov posted on Bluesky. “Our channel on YouTube has been deleted due to ‘spam and deceptive policies.’ Which is the biggest WTF moment in our brand’s history on social platforms. We have only posted demos of our own original products, never anything else….”

Officially, YouTube told Pavlov that his channel violated YouTube’s “spam, deceptive practices, and scam policy,” but Pavlov could think of no videos that might be labeled as violative.

“We have nothing to hide,” Pavlov told Ars, calling YouTube’s decision to delete the channel with “zero warnings” a “terrible, terrible day for an independent, honest software brand.”

“We have never been involved with anything remotely shady,” Pavlov said. “We have never taken a single dollar dishonestly from anyone. And we have thousands of customers that stand by our brand.”

Ars saw Pavolov’s post and reached out to YouTube to find out why the channel was targeted for takedown. About three hours later, the channel was suddenly restored. That’s remarkably fast, as YouTube can sometimes take days or weeks to review an appeal. A YouTube spokesperson later confirmed that the Sinesvibes channel was reinstated due to the regular appeals process, indicating perhaps that YouTube could see that Sinesvibes’ removal was an obvious mistake.

Developer calls for more human review

For small brands like Sinesvibes, even spending half a day in limbo was a cause for crisis. Immediately, the brand worried

about 50 broken product pages for one of its distributors, as well as “hundreds if not thousands of news articles posted about our software on dozens of different websites.” Unsure if the channel would ever be restored, Sinesvibes spent most of Monday surveying the damage.

Now that the channel is restored, Pavlov is stuck confronting how much of the Sinesvibes brand depends on the YouTube channel remaining online while still grappling with uncertainty since the reason behind the ban remains unknown. He told Ars that’s why, for small brands, simply having a channel reinstated doesn’t resolve all their concerns.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2025/02/youtube-briefly-banned-15-year-old-channel-with-no-strikes-and-wont-say-why/

Tariffs may soon spike costs of cars, household goods, consumer tech



Canada has already threatened to retaliate by imposing 35 percent tariffs on US goods, although that could change, depending on the outcome of a meeting this afternoon between Trump and outgoing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Currently, there's seemingly tension between the Trump administration and Trudeau, however.

On Saturday, Trudeau called Trump's rationale for imposing tariffs on Canada—which Trudeau noted is responsible for less than 1 percent of drugs flowing into the US—"the flimsiest pretext possible," NBC News reported.

This morning, the director of the White House's National Economic Council, Kevin Hassett, reportedly criticized Canada's response on CNBC. While Mexico is viewed as being "very, very serious" about Trump's tariffs threat, "Canadians appear to have misunderstood the plain language of the executive order and they're interpreting it as a trade war," Hassett said.

On the campaign trail, Trump promised to lower prices of

groceries, cars, gas, housing, and other goods, AP News noted. But on Sunday, Trump clearly warned reporters while boarding Air Force One that tariffs could have the opposite effect, ABC News reported, and could significantly worsen inflation the longer the trade policy stands.

“We may have short term, some, a little pain, and people understand that, but, long term, the United States has been ripped off by virtually every country in the world,” Trump said.

Online shoppers, car buyers brace for tariffs

In addition to imposing new tariffs on these countries, Trump’s executive orders also took aim at their access to the “de minimus” exemption that allows businesses, including online retailers, to send shipments below $800 into the US without being taxed. That move could likely spike costs for Americans using popular Chinese retail platforms like Temu or Shein.

Before leaving office, Joe Biden had threatened in September to alter the “de minimus” rule, accusing platforms like Temu or Shein of flooding the US with “huge volumes of low-value products such as textiles and apparel” and making “it increasingly difficult to target and block illegal or unsafe shipments.” Following the same logic, it seems that Trump wants to exclude Canada, China, and potentially Mexico from the duty-free exemption to make it easier to identify illegal drug shipments.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2025/02/tariffs-on-biggest-us-trading-partners-likely-to-spike-cost-of-cars-tech/

FCC demands CBS provide unedited transcript of Kamala Harris interview



The Federal Communications Commission demanded that CBS provide the unedited transcript of a *60 Minutes* interview with Kamala Harris that is the subject of a complaint to the FCC and a lawsuit filed by President Donald Trump.

CBS News on Wednesday received a letter of inquiry in which the FCC requested “the full, unedited transcript and camera feeds” of the Harris interview, The New York Times reported today. “We are working to comply with that inquiry as we are legally compelled to do,” a CBS News spokesperson told media outlets.

FCC Chairman Brendan Carr repeatedly echoed Trump’s complaints about alleged media bias before the election and has taken

steps to punish news broadcasters since Trump promoted him to the chairmanship. Complaints against CBS, ABC, and NBC stations were dismissed under former Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel, but Carr reversed those dismissals in his first week as chair. Carr also ordered investigations into NPR and CBS.

FCC Commissioner Anna Gomez, a Democrat, criticized what she called Carr's "latest action to weaponize our broadcast licensing authority."

"This is a retaliatory move by the government against broadcasters whose content or coverage is perceived to be unfavorable," Gomez said today. "It is designed to instill fear in broadcast stations and influence a network's editorial decisions. The Communications Act clearly prohibits the Commission from censoring broadcasters and the First Amendment protects journalistic decisions against government intimidation. We must respect the rule of law, uphold the Constitution, and safeguard public trust in our oversight of broadcasters."

CBS considers settling Trump lawsuit

Trump sued CBS over the Harris interview, and executives at CBS owner Paramount Global have held settlement talks with Trump representatives. "A settlement would be an extraordinary concession by a major U.S. media company to a sitting president, especially in a case in which there is no evidence that the network got facts wrong or damaged the plaintiff's reputation," The New York Times wrote.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2025/01/fcc-demands-cbs-provide-unedited-transcript-of-kamala-harris-interview/

Treasury official retires after clash with DOGE over access to payment system



“This is a mechanical job—they pay Social Security benefits, they pay vendors, whatever. It’s not one where there’s a role for nonmechanical things, at least from the career standpoint. Your whole job is to pay the bills as they’re due,” Mazur was quoted as saying. “It’s never been used in a way to execute a partisan agenda… You have to really put bad intentions in place for that to be the case.”

The Trump administration previously issued an order to freeze funding for a wide range of government programs, but rescinded the order after two days of protest and a judge’s ruling that temporarily blocked the funding freeze.

Trump ordered cooperation with DOGE

The Trump executive order establishing DOGE took the existing United States Digital Service and renamed it the United States DOGE Service. It's part of the Executive Office of the President and is tasked with "modernizing Federal technology and software to maximize governmental efficiency and productivity."

Trump's order said that federal agencies will have to collaborate with DOGE. "Among other things, the USDS Administrator shall work with Agency Heads to promote inter-operability between agency networks and systems, ensure data integrity, and facilitate responsible data collection and synchronization," the order said. "Agency Heads shall take all necessary steps, in coordination with the USDS Administrator and to the maximum extent consistent with law, to ensure USDS has full and prompt access to all unclassified agency records, software systems, and IT systems. USDS shall adhere to rigorous data protection standards."

The Post writes that "Musk has sought to exert sweeping control over the inner workings of the US government, installing longtime surrogates at several agencies, including the Office of Personnel Management, which essentially handles federal human resources, and the General Services Administration."

On Thursday, Musk visited the General Services Administration headquarters in Washington, DC, The New York Times reported. The Department of Government Efficiency's account on X stated earlier this week that the GSA had "terminated three leases of mostly empty office space" for a savings of $1.6 million and that more cuts are planned. In another post, DOGE claimed it "is saving the Federal Government approx. $1 billion/day, mostly from stopping the hiring of people into unnecessary positions, deletion of DEI and stopping improper payments to

foreign organizations, all consistent with the President’s Executive Orders.”

“Mr. Musk’s visit to the General Services Administration could presage more cost-cutting efforts focused on federal real estate,” the Times wrote. “The agency also plays a role in federal contracting and in providing technology services across the federal government.”

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2025/01/musks-doge-clashes-with-treasury-over-access-to-payment-system-report-says/

Dell risks employee retention by forcing all teams back into offices full-time



In a statement to Ars, Dell's PR team said:

> *"We continually evolve our business so we're set up to deliver the best innovation, value, and service to our customers and partners. That includes more in-person connections to drive market leadership."*

The road to full RTO

After Dell allowed employees to work from home two days per week, Dell's sales team in March became the first department to order employees back into offices full-time. At the time, Dell said it had data showing that salespeople are more productive on site. Dell corporate strategy SVP Vivek Mohindra said last month that sales' RTO brought "huge benefits" in "learning from each other, training, and mentorship."

The company's "manufacturing teams, engineers in the labs, onsite team members, and leaders" had also previously been called into offices full-time, Business Insider reported today.

Since February, Dell has been among the organizations pushing for more in-person work since pandemic restrictions lifted, with reported efforts including VPN and badge tracking.

Risking personnel

Like other organizations, Dell risks losing employees by implementing a divisive mandate. For Dell specifically, internal tracking data reportedly found that nearly half of workers already opted for remote work over being eligible for promotions or new roles, according to a September Business Insider report.

Research has suggested that companies that issue RTO mandates subsequently lose some of their best talent. A November

research paper (PDF) from the University of Pittsburgh, Baylor University, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business researchers that cited LinkedIn data found this particularly true for “high-tech” and financial firms. The researchers concluded that average turnover rates increased by 14 percent on average after companies issued RTO policies. This research, in addition to other studies, has also found that companies with in-office work mandates are at risk of losing senior-level employees especially.

Some analysts don’t believe Dell is in danger of a mass exodus, though. Bob O’Donnell, president and chief analyst at Technalysis Research, told Business Insider in December, “It’s not like I think Dell’s going to lose a whole bunch of people to HP or Lenovo.”

Patrick Moorhead, CEO and chief analyst at Moor Insights & Strategy, said he believes RTO would be particularly beneficial to Dell’s product development.

Still, some workers have accused Dell of using RTO policies to try to reduce headcount. There’s no proof of this, but broader research, including commentary from various company executives outside of Dell, has shown that some companies have used RTO policies to try to get people to quit.

Dell declined to comment about potential employee blowback to Ars Technica.

https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2025/01/dell-risks-employee-retention-by-forcing-all-teams-back-into-offices-full-time/

Trump’s FCC chair investigates NPR and PBS, urges Congress to defund them



Federal Communications Commission Chairman Brendan Carr has ordered an investigation into NPR and PBS in a move that Democrats described as an attempt to intimidate the media.

“I am writing to inform you that I have asked the FCC’s Enforcement Bureau to open an investigation regarding the airing of NPR and PBS programming across your broadcast member stations,” Carr wrote in a letter yesterday to the leaders of NPR and PBS.

Carr alleged that NPR and PBS are violating a federal law prohibiting noncommercial educational broadcast stations from running commercial advertisements. “I am concerned that NPR and PBS broadcasts could be violating federal law by airing commercials,” Carr wrote. “In particular, it is possible that NPR and PBS member stations are broadcasting underwriting announcements that cross the line into prohibited commercial

advertisements."

Carr's letter did not provide any specific examples of underwriting announcements that might violate the law, but said the "announcements should not promote the contributor's products, services, or businesses, and they may not contain comparative or qualitative descriptions, price information, calls to action, or inducements to buy, sell, rent, or lease."

Carr: Defund NPR and PBS

Carr pointed out that NPR and PBS member broadcast stations are licensed by the FCC. He also stated his opposition to government funding for NPR and PBS, though he acknowledged that isn't up to the FCC. Carr wrote:

> *For your awareness, I will be providing a copy of this letter to relevant Members of Congress because I believe this FCC investigation may prove relevant to an ongoing legislative debate. In particular, Congress is actively considering whether to stop requiring taxpayers to subsidize NPR and PBS programming. For my own part, I do not see a reason why Congress should continue sending taxpayer dollars to NPR and PBS given the changes in the media marketplace since the passage of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967.*
>
> *To the extent that these taxpayer dollars are being used to support a for-profit endeavor or an entity that is airing commercial advertisements, then that would further undermine any case for continuing to fund NPR and PBS with taxpayer dollars.*

The FCC's Democratic commissioners, Anna Gomez and Geoffrey Starks, issued statements denouncing the investigation. "This appears to be yet another Administration effort to weaponize the power of the FCC. The FCC has no business intimidating and silencing broadcast media," Gomez said.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2025/01/trumps-fcc-chair-investigates-npr-and-pbs-urges-congress-to-defund-them/