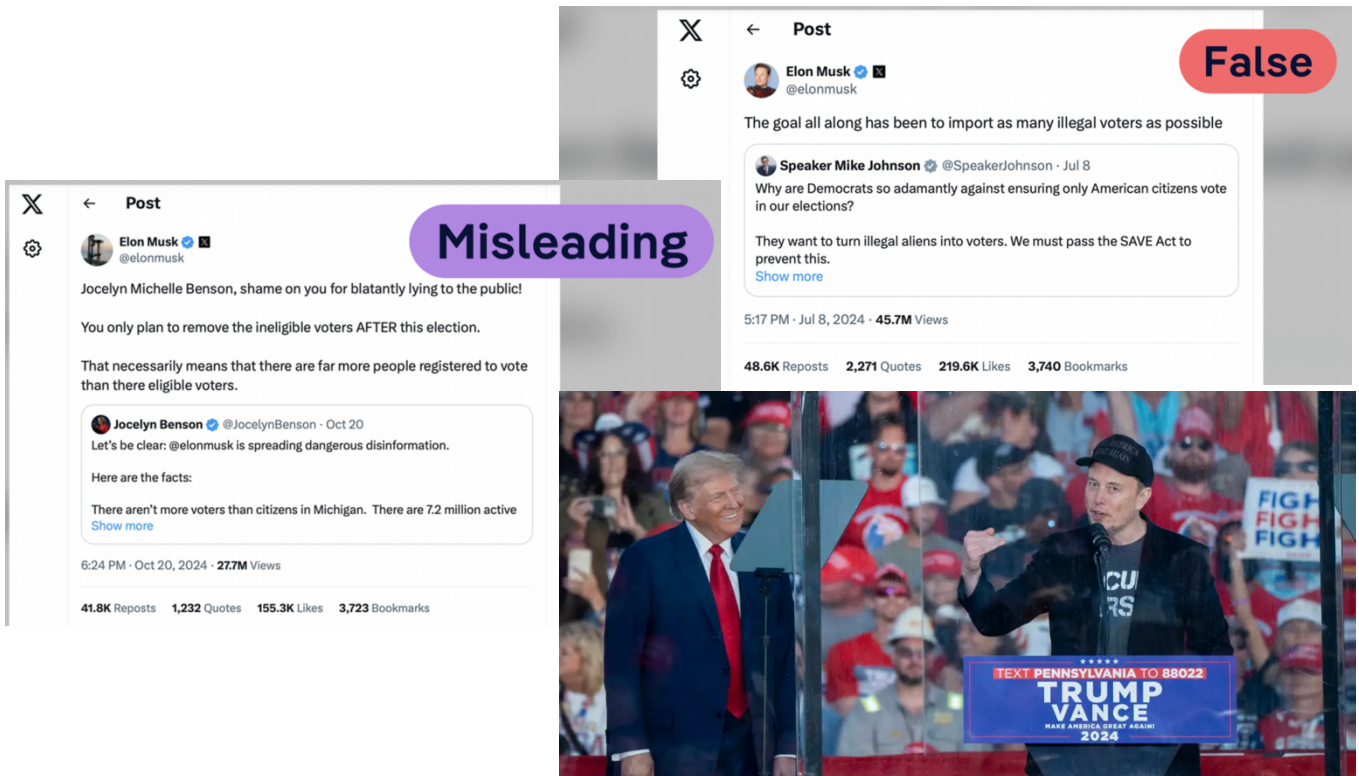


# What's with Elon Musk and the US Presidential elections?

## Document 1



## Document 2

### Elon Musk is Trump's biggest cheerleader. How could he affect election results?

*The Guardian*, October 18, 2024

[...] The billionaire CEO of Tesla and SpaceX has emerged as a unique influence on the campaign in ways that set him apart from even the most politically active billionaires and tech elite. He is all at once a vocal Trump surrogate, campaign mega-donor, informal policy adviser, media influencer and prolific source of online disinformation. At the same time, he is the world's richest man and the owner of one of the United States' most influential social networks, while also operating as a government defense contractor and wielding power over critical satellite communications infrastructure.

On Tuesday, Federal Election Commission filings showed that Musk donated \$75m in the last three months to his pro-Trump America Pac. The group has become a major ground game operative in battleground states, and Musk is its only donor.

Although the ultra-wealthy have always tried to influence politics, few people in US history have possessed the mix of immense resources and intent to use them to sway an election that Musk does. [...]

Musk's most visible Trump support takes place on X [...]. Musk's account has more than 200 million followers, and he has directed the company's engineers to improve visibility of his tweets – the algorithm now boosts Musk's own tweets beyond that of other users so that more people have to see them. [...]

As election day nears, Musk's feed has become a constant stream of praise for Trump and vitriol against Harris. A large percentage of his tweets amplify false or misleading information, and the people who Musk interacts with on the platform are often far-right accounts with a history of spreading misinformation. Musk's AI image generator, Grok, has also become one of the most prominent sources of political deepfakes that have permeated the election.

Musk has used X to help the Trump campaign, not only by echoing its talking points or amplifying the president, but by preventing the spread of material that could be harmful. Reporter Ken Klippenstein published a dossier of background information on vice-presidential candidate JD Vance in early October that was obtained through a hack of the Trump campaign allegedly by Iran. The New York Times reported last week that the campaign asked X to prevent links to the published dossier from spreading there, which X followed through on, blocking links to it and suspending Klippenstein's account. [...]

While Musk has rallied online for Trump, he has committed large amounts of money to financing on-the-ground operations and media campaigns for the former president. [...]

The money is not only flowing to get-out-the-vote initiatives, though. Musk has donated to the conservative group Building America's Future, which has set up cash awards for people who bring the group evidence of election fraud. [...]

Over the past several years Musk has faced investigations, fines and delays over public safety concerns on a range of his projects. The FAA alleged last month that Musk's SpaceX broke launch safety protocols, and over the years has grounded the company multiple times for violating regulations. [...] The EPA has also launched investigations into SpaceX for complaints that it is dumping unsafe amounts of wastewater into the ecosystem [...].

These constant fights with the full alphabet of regulatory agencies has coincided with Musk making numerous public statements in favor of deregulation, as well as calling for a full-scale audit of the federal government. That idea has found purchase with Trump, who announced in September that he would launch a Musk-led government efficiency commission that would audit federal agencies for places to cut. Musk wants to call it the Department of Government Efficiency, or Doge [...].

Musk's public rightward shift is an extension of years of allying himself with rightwing leaders around the world. In recent years, Musk has cozied up to nationalist and nativist politicians including Italy's Giorgia Meloni and Matteo Salvini, Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu and India's Narendra Modi. [...]

But Musk's promotion of far-right beliefs and support for Trump have also taken on a personal dimension that goes beyond business calculations. Musk's rhetoric on X has

fixated on conservative grievances and he has amplified racist and antisemitic narratives through his tweets. Anti-immigration and anti-trans views have become a frequent talking point. [...]

### **Document 3**

#### **Elon Musk could be the biggest winner of a second Trump term**

*NBC News*, November 5, 2024

Tech billionaire Elon Musk and his business empire stand to reap massive rewards if former President Donald Trump returns to the White House. But Musk, who has turned X into a pro-Trump echo chamber, will have unparalleled conflicts of interest if he becomes a government efficiency czar.

The potential benefits for Musk and his companies are wide-ranging: possibly touching regulatory issues like labor laws and environmental protections, lower tax rates and the chance for more government contracts for Musk's rocket company, SpaceX.

As measured in dollars, few people may have more at stake in Tuesday's presidential election than Musk, and in the past several months, Musk has acted accordingly, enthusiastically backing Trump's campaign through appearances and over \$118 million donated through his super PAC.

Musk, 53, could also play an influential role in a second Trump administration, as an adviser on spending cuts or in a more substantial way—which could be an ethical morass if he comes to wield power over government agencies that regulate his businesses.

Apart from ethical issues, Musk's commercial investments abroad—particularly in China—combined with his company's sensitive federal contracts for the U.S. military's space program raise serious questions about conflicts of interest that could jeopardize America's national security, according to current and former U.S. officials and experts.

Musk's electric vehicle company Tesla heavily relies on China, now seen by both political parties as the primary security threat and economic rival to the United States. Tesla depends on China as a production base and as a crucial market for its vehicles. During a visit to China earlier this year, Musk echoed Beijing's line on Taiwan, describing it as an “integral part” of China.

Unlike some tycoons or corporate chiefs, Musk has not shied away from weighing in on geopolitics even when it is at odds with U.S. foreign policy, advocating positions on the war in Ukraine that aligned with the Kremlin's stance. Musk has had telephone conversations with Russian President Vladimir Putin, according to a source with knowledge of the matter, which was first reported by The Wall Street Journal.

Some lawmakers who spoke to NBC News on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitive nature of the conversations worry that Musk could try to push U.S. policy in a direction favorable to his financial interests. They are concerned that Musk could undercut America's goal of preventing China from gaining access to cutting-edge technology that can be used to build up its military and intelligence capabilities. [...]

Musk stands to intensify his companies' business with the government through his now deep connection with Trump, and potentially target rivals in the aerospace world, such as Boeing, through Trump's efficiency efforts. Musk has previously criticized Boeing, which has massive government contracts in partnership with other defense giants. [...]

Trump has given conflicting accounts about how Musk might fit into his administration, telling Fox News in an interview last month that he'd like Musk to be his "secretary of cost-cutting" but also "not in the Cabinet." [...]

Rather than shy away from potential conflicts of interest, Musk has talked openly about his desire to see Trump directly help his businesses by slashing regulations. [...]

When it comes to taxes, Trump has been transparent about his desire to keep taxes low for corporations and wealthy individuals like Musk. [...]

There's more transparency, though, around how Musk stands to benefit from Trump's regulatory posture.

The 19 separate fights between Musk and the federal government have involved 12 different government entities and touched on a broad cross-section of everyday life: from a wildlife refuge in Texas near a SpaceX launch site to alleged racial harassment at a Tesla factory in California to Tesla's decision to market driver-assistance software as "full self-driving" even though it requires human supervision.

Separate from Musk's business empire, his America PAC has been entangled in a legal battle, with Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner over the super PAC's \$1 million daily prize giveaways. On Monday, a judge declined to halt the cash prizes.

Enforcement of federal laws and regulations generally falls to presidential appointees, and experts say it's not difficult to predict how Musk would fare under Trump's picks. [...]