**Headline:** Trump and Musk Are a Match Leading Us to Hell

**Teaser:** The two dangerous demagogues are openly colluding with one another to seize political power so they can milk taxpayers and dismantle government regulations that protect the public.

By Sonali Kolhatkar

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**[Article Body:]**

Elon Musk’s recently announced scheme to bribe voters into backing his favorite presidential nominee, Donald Trump, is a symbol of the economic worldview Republicans are promoting: one where the lines between corporate interests and public regulators are blurred, where government officials and commercial actors scratch each other’s backs so they can gobble up taxpayer dollars.

Musk announced he would be [giving away $1 million](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c748l0zv4x8o) a day to a lucky winner who signs his America PAC petition affirming the First and Second Amendments.

The sweepstakes are for registered voters in swing states, who, by signing the petition, are passing a sort of Republican purity test on affirming the right to free speech—which the extremist conservatives often use as the basis for spreading racist dogma and conspiracy theories—and the right to bear any and all firearms, including weapons of mass murder such as those used against defenseless children.

Musk’s audacious plan dangerously skirts the boundaries of legality. There are federal election laws in place banning financial incentives to vote. Even something as seemingly benign as offering freebies to those sporting [“I Voted” stickers](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/06/us/voting-free-stuff.html) is potentially against the law. Given this, Musk’s lawyers appear to have advised him against directly paying voters to cast their ballots for Trump and so, bribing registered voters to sign a Trumpian petition is what the billionaire seems to have settled on as a workaround.

Political [commentators](https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2024-10-24/elon-musk-voter-lottery-swing-states-donald-trump-election-2024-harry-litman) remarked that Musk would likely get away with skirting or breaking the law. After all, the United States justice system is long known for [favoring the wealthy](https://www.businessinsider.com/rich-people-dont-face-same-consequences-us-system-falls-apart-2020-10). Musk’s move is so outrageous that it even prompted a group of former Republican lawmakers and advisers to [write](https://www.washingtonpost.com/documents/8f24d8e7-9f44-4ea3-a33d-b7de2187f438.pdf?itid=lk_inline_manual_2) to the U.S. Department of Justice asking Attorney General Merrick Garland to investigate him. The Justice Department subsequently [warned](https://www.cnn.com/2024/10/23/politics/elon-musk-justice-department-letter/index.html) Musk that he may be breaking the law.

The [world’s richest man](https://inequality.org/great-divide/how-did-elon-musk-become-the-richest-person-on-earth/) is throwing his lot in with Trump—and throwing millions of dollars toward electing him from his endless well of cash. Musk has been vocal about why he backs the Hitlerian despot. Trump has also been open about his desire to reward Musk with political power in exchange for financial contributions. It’s a match made in heaven, designed to lead the rest of us into hell.

The overtly transactional relationship between the two goes at least as far back as this past summer when Trump said to a crowd of his supporters—few, if any, of whom are millionaires, let alone billionaires—that the country must give wealthy people like Musk special treatment. “We have to make life good for our smart people, and [Elon Musk is] as smart as you get,” [said Trump](https://www.msnbc.com/the-reidout/reidout-blog/trump-elon-musk-project-2025-zuckerberg-rcna163339) at a rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in July 2024.

Since then, [Musk has lobbied Trump](https://www.cnn.com/2024/09/05/politics/trump-economic-plans-musk-government-commission/index.html) on social media for a job in the government to enable exactly that: a tailor-made position to strip away regulations holding people like him and corporations like his, accountable on behalf of the public. Trump didn’t even attempt to hide the source of the idea, saying, “At the suggestion of Elon Musk, who has given me his complete and total endorsement… I will create a government efficiency commission,” which would make “recommendations for drastic reforms.”

Musk expects to lead it, having already named the nonexistent agency the “[Department of Government Efficiency,](https://www.cnn.com/2024/10/22/tech/elon-musk-government-efficiency/index.html)” while Trump claimed he would appoint Musk as “Secretary of Cost-Cutting.” During his first term, Trump [promised](https://www.eenews.net/articles/elon-musk-plans-a-bonfire-of-nonsense-regulations/) to undo two regulations for every new regulation that was enacted. He has now promised to cancel 10 existing regulations for every new one.

While Musk may come across as merely a “smart” man who, through ruthless efficiency, has created business models that drive innovation and benefit the public, in truth what he is expert at is depending on U.S. taxpayers for handouts. He is, as per a recent report by [Politico](https://www.politico.com/newsletters/west-wing-playbook/2024/10/08/the-trouble-with-elon-00182921), “the single biggest beneficiary of U.S. government contracts.” Further, [Rolling Stone](https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/elon-musk-trump-tax-break-election-2024-1235141380/) pointed out that if Musk were to be given a government appointment, he might get a special tax benefit that only federal officials are eligible for, which could reap even more financial benefits for him.

Just as he seems to believe he is above federal election law, Musk does not think environmental or labor regulations apply to him. His SpaceX company, which has delusions of colonizing Mars, has [routinely violated the Clean Water Act](https://www.nbcnews.com/science/environment/spacex-polluted-waters-texas-regulators-rcna166283) in Texas by illegally dumping industrial waste near sensitive bodies of water. When the Federal Aviation Administration announced hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines against SpaceX over violations, [Musk threatened to sue](https://www.cnbc.com/2024/09/17/elon-musk-says-spacex-will-sue-faa-for-regulatory-overreach.html) the agency.

Musk has also flouted labor laws. The National Labor Relations Board ruled that his company [Tesla](https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/usa-nlrb-finds-tesla-guilty-of-violating-federal-labour-law-following-dismissal-of-worker-for-union-organising-elon-musk-tweet-threatening-to-remove-benefits-from-unionised-workers/) illegally fired union organizers and thereby violated labor regulations. [SpaceX](https://www.cnbc.com/2024/03/22/elon-musks-spacex-hit-with-nlrb-complaint-over-severance.html) has also gotten into trouble with the NLRB over severance payments. In response, Musk is [suing](https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2024-01-31/column-elon-musk-nlrb-lawsuit-spacex) the agency, and questioning its constitutionality.

One corporate executive, [Matt Teske](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cj6e6zzwnllo), the CEO of an electric vehicle charging platform named Chargeway, told BBC, “I think Musk’s interests are focused, predominantly, around a handful of things that are important to him related to his businesses, [with] regulation being something he’s voiced concerns around.” It’s no wonder Musk wants to oversee an agency to protect his own interests and make his companies more profitable.

Moreover, if Trump takes office, Musk hopes to become even more dependent on taxpayer money. Industry analysts told the [Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2024/10/24/musk-trump-starlink-satellites-election/) they expect Trump to award Musk’s company Starlink billions of dollars of new government contracts if he becomes president.

To summarize: Musk profits by milking taxpayers, rails against the strings attached that are designed to protect taxpayers, and is now using a tiny portion of his resulting fortune to bribe an authoritarian leader so he can do away with the regulations holding him accountable and so he can suck up even more cushy government contracts.

What Musk wants is a corporatocracy, not a democracy. Such context is usually missing from the narrative that Trump backers are fed about billionaires.

Meanwhile, both Trump and Musk have successfully distracted their backers from their grand plans for grift by spewing racist and vicious lies about the most vulnerable people in our midst: [undocumented immigrants](https://www.counterpunch.org/2024/07/23/whos-a-bigger-threat-to-democracy-immigrants-or-billionaires/).

The extent of their lies and the irony of their claims would be laughable if [election polls](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/us/elections/polls-president.html) didn’t show a race that is so dangerously close.