

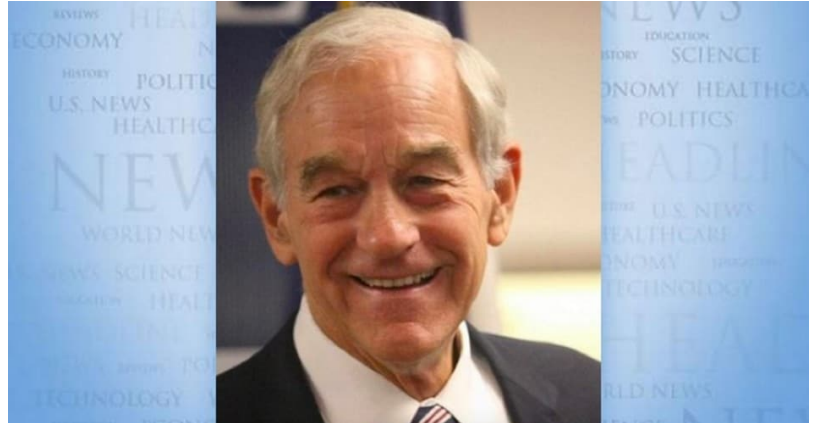


Written by [Ron Paul](#) on April 28, 2025

The Empire Strikes Back

News this week that Elon Musk will soon be departing his “Department of Government Efficiency” (DOGE) is a grim reminder of what happens when you challenge big spending DC. Unfortunately, the lesson once again is that when you challenge the empire, the empire eventually strikes back.

President Trump rode into office with the help of Elon Musk’s ambitious plan to cut two trillion dollars in spending and slash useless and bloated government bureaucracies. Opinion polls demonstrated the huge popularity of the “Department.” Americans were excited when DOGE came to DC.



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The exposure of the real harm being done to the country by agencies like USAID and others reinforced the idea that much of the “Federal bureaucracy” was simply not needed. Although Musk became a figure of hate for the entrenched special interests, to the large chunk of America forced to pay for Washington’s excesses he became a hero.

Many in Congress, seeing its popularity, actively embraced DOGE. Suddenly those who helped us rack up \$37 trillion in debt were talking about making huge cuts and posing for photos with Musk.

Unfortunately, after the photos were taken and the hoopla had died down, Congress returned to doing what it usually does: nothing. There is no way for a DOGE to succeed without the Legislative Branch enshrining those cuts in legislation. But when the massive “Big Beautiful” spending bill was introduced, the spending cuts were nowhere to be found.

In the end it was the Beltway addiction to the global US military empire that may have hammered the final nail in DOGE’s coffin. The “Big Beautiful” spending bill actually increased military spending even after President Trump hinted that a 50 percent cut was possible. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth bragged about presiding over the “first” trillion-dollar defense budget. Starting a war on Yemen — at over a billion dollars a month — and saber rattling over Iran are the most obvious evidence that the empire has struck back. And of course the DC hawks want to “confront” China.

This isn’t the first time a populist, popular movement to tame the Beltway beast was embraced then defeated by that same beast. The “Tea Party” movement was launched in December, 2007, with volunteers supporting my 2008 Presidential campaign holding a record-breaking 24 hour “money bomb” on the anniversary of the 1773 Boston Tea Party.

Americans sick of deficit spending, over-reaching government, and the costly and counterproductive US military empire overseas, joined together to demand change. The “money bomb” success got Washington’s attention — money is the lifeblood of the political class — and before too long politicians of all stripes declared themselves to be part of the “Tea Party.”

They loved the popularity of associating themselves with the “Tea Party.” But actually cutting



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government? Not so much.

The first thing these newly-minted “Tea Party” members rejected was our demand for an end to the unsustainable, bloated military budget and our aggressive foreign policy. Eventually they backed away from other spending restrictions and within a few years the “brand” was diluted and tossed away.

What is the lesson here? Is it all futile? Hardly. The popularity of DOGE shows that Americans still want a much smaller government. That is great news, and the country owes a debt of gratitude to Elon for reminding us of this. But until Americans elect Representatives who have the courage to follow through beyond photo-ops, we will sadly continue down the path toward bankruptcy and collapse.

Ron Paul is a former U.S. congressman from Texas. This [article](#) originally appeared at the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity and is reprinted here with permission.



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