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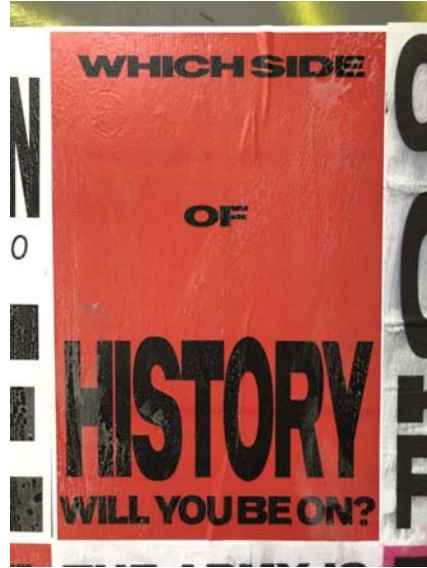
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I Won't Resign My Federal Job and No One Else Should Either



Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair

Donald Trump and Elon Musk are dismantling vital public services in the name of combating “inefficiency.” That’s meant abruptly — and often illegally — firing tens of thousands of workers like me.

The word “inefficiency” conjures images of long lines at the DMV and pencil pushing employees. But as a federal employee myself, I know the work we do is actually essential to the well-being of all Americans.

In my federal job, my coworkers and I will go to court to keep landlords in Alabama from discriminating against families for having children. We’ll stop another in New York from discriminating against a disabled veteran. And we’ll fight to keep bankers from denying home loans to families because of the color of their skin.

That's just a tiny fraction of the crucial work done by millions of public servants who work daily to improve and often save lives. Everybody benefits from these services.

Without us, nobody would be able to get their Social Security checks, or their Medicare and Medicaid benefits. Veterans wouldn't get free, high quality health care tailored to their specific needs. Discrimination wouldn't be monitored and stopped.

Anything that the private sector couldn't squeeze profits out of simply wouldn't get done — to the detriment of all Americans, everywhere. That's why I didn't accept Musk's bogus resignation "buyout" offer — and it's why I encourage all federal workers to speak out in defense of the services we provide to the American people.

Contrary to what critics like to suggest, the federal workforce is actually *smaller* relative to the U.S. population than it's been in the past *century*. We're paid about 25 percent less than our counterparts in the private sector for comparable jobs. And we're spread out all over America: over 80 percent of us live outside the Washington, D.C. area.

The largest federal department in terms of employees is the Postal Service, whose more than half a million hard-working employees serve every U.S. address, rain or shine, six days a week. Rural Americans that private shipping companies don't find it profitable to serve will suffer the most if this service is cut.

The next is the Department of Veteran Affairs, which operates hospitals throughout the country for veterans. As a result, a huge number of federal employees — roughly 300,000 — are health care workers.

Some of the most unnoticed but most critical work federal workers perform is protecting Americans by making sure businesses follow the law.

The Food and Drug Administration ensures that the food businesses sell is safe to eat. The Department of Labor makes sure employers respect the rights and safety of workers, including paying them fairly. The Environmental Protection Agency puts a check on corporate polluters, ensuring that our water is safe to drink and our air safe to breathe.

Without this work — and the workers who do it — our country would plunge back into the dark days of the robber barons, who regularly took advantage of workers, consumers, and families.

Of course, the federal government can be improved like any large institution. But the best and only way to do that is by listening to the ideas and needs of federal workers, not abusing and firing them.

At a time when the cost of living has increased for working people, we know that people are angry and looking for someone to blame. But federal employees aren't the root of our

problems. We are a necessary part of the solution. Government services are often some of the most efficient institutions because they're operated to benefit everyone, not turn a profit. We're serving the public, not minting millionaires.

We ask our fellow Americans to take action with us in defending our livelihoods — so that we can continue to serve you all.

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Paul Osadebe is a federal worker, a union steward with AFGE Local 476, and an organizer with the Federal Unionists Network.