Policy Issue Discussion Post

The DOGE Efforts and Their Aftermath

PAD 642

Overview

In this module, you learned about budgeting systems, budgeting reforms, and why reforms are adopted. For this policy issue post, we will examine a recent federal budgeting reform effort: the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), an initiative led by Elon Musk, who served as a senior advisor to President Trump in 2025.

For decades, the federal government has pursued cost-cutting and efficiency reforms with mixed success. DOGE's stated goals echoed many earlier efforts: reducing waste and inefficiency, cutting federal spending, and reducing federal debt. However, DOGE appears to differ from other federal budgeting or accountability reforms discussed in the course—such as the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 (see textbook, p. 188), as well as the text's coverage of federal performance budgeting reforms (pp. 188–194), and federal liability reforms (pp. 232–234).

This discussion asks you to analyze DOGE as a budget reform and cutback strategy: What is its approach? What did it accomplish? What went wrong (if anything), and why? Your post should use course concepts to move beyond opinion and toward informed argument.

Your task

Since the wind-down of the DOGE effort in late 2025, there has been some review and reflection on this initiative. Find relevant and credible sources to research the effects and consequences of DOGE, and write a discussion post of no more than 500 words responding to two or three of the guiding questions below. Your post should apply module concepts (budget reforms, reasons for reform, and impediments to reform) and draw on credible sources.

Getting started (optional sources)

I provided several links to get you started. Note that I try to provide a balanced view of the issue. You can start with one of these links (or just skim them, or don't view them at all if you don't like them) to learn about the topic, and find your own sources to learn about what happened with DOGE.

1. The White House: Establishing and implementing the President's "department of government efficiency"
2. Brookings: How will we know if DOGE is succeeding?
3. New York Times: How Did DOGE Disrupt So Much While Saving So Little?
4. BBC: What is Doge and why has Musk left?
5. The Ezra Klein Show: What is DOGE's Real Goal?
6. The Cato Institute: DOGE Produced the Largest Peacetime Workforce Cut on Record, but Spending Kept Rising

Guiding questions (Pick 2-3 of the questions below to guide your post)

1. What factors typically lead to the adoption of federal budget reforms like DOGE?

2. How would you summarize the DOGE approach?
3. What has DOGE accomplished, and what evidence supports those claims?
4. How does DOGE differ from other federal budgeting reforms or cutback strategies discussed in the textbook?
5. What unintended consequences (social, administrative, economic, or governance-related) have emerged, and why?
6. Did DOGE violate any key public budgeting/administration principles (e.g., transparency, accountability, equity, legality, due process)? Explain.
7. Was DOGE a "good faith" effort to reduce spending? What is your position on this issue?
8. If the goal is long-run deficit reduction, what should be the next approach—and why is it more likely to succeed?

What to submit

Write a discussion post of no more than 500 words responding to 2-3 guiding questions listed above. Do not use generative AI to write your discussion post. I want to read your own thinking -- your position, values, perspective, and voice. AI-generated posts tend to sound superficial. They often summarize from Wikipedia without analysis, avoid taking a clear stance, and lack a personal voice. Posts that appear to be AI-generated will receive lower scores.

It is very valuable to have an informed, rational discussion on a policy issue. We all have our own opinions on this matter. After posting, read and respond to at least one other posts to contribute to the class discussion.