

Elon Musk Offers to Pay TSA Workers as Shutdown Continues

Elon Musk stepped in Saturday with an offer to personally cover the salaries of Transportation Security Administration workers going without pay, as a partial government shutdown enters its second month with no end in sight.

“I would like to offer to pay the salaries of TSA personnel during this funding impasse that is negatively affecting the lives of so many Americans at airports throughout the country,” Musk posted to X Saturday morning.

The DHS funding standoff has left TSA agents working without paychecks, fueling staffing shortages and security delays at airports across the country. Republicans have pushed to fund the Department of Homeland Security. Democrats have blocked the effort, insisting on stripping out immigration enforcement funding while keeping other agency budgets intact.

TSA employees are classified as essential workers and legally required to show up even during a shutdown. Pay is delayed, not guaranteed, and the financial strain has been severe. Eviction notices. Repossessed vehicles. Overdrawn bank accounts. That’s the reality for officers keeping lines moving at major airports right now.



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The delays have been visible. Security wait times at several U.S. airports have exceeded three hours. Houston, Atlanta, New Orleans, and Philadelphia have been hit hardest. Footage from Philadelphia’s airport earlier this week showed hundreds of passengers backed up on escalators and elevator banks, waiting to clear a single checkpoint.

The TSA has also been under a hiring freeze since last year, making attrition that much more damaging. The union's top official warned Thursday the situation is set to "get worse."

It remains unclear whether Musk's offer is legally workable. No federal law obviously permits a private individual to fund government employees during a shutdown, and the arrangement would require sign-off from officials who haven't yet responded publicly. Musk did not detail the mechanism in his post.

The TSA standoff is a direct consequence of Democrats refusing a clean DHS funding bill. Republicans have repeatedly tried to keep the agency funded. Democrats have used TSA workers as leverage to protect spending on programs tied to immigration that the Trump administration is dismantling.

A top TSA union leader had not commented publicly on Musk's offer as of Saturday morning.

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