

February 7, 2025



Wyden also joined a letter to White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles, demanding that she answer questions about Musk and his team's illegal access to classified government materials and Americans' private data, including Social Security numbers, home addresses and bank accounts.

Protestors also want Democrats to block Trump's remaining nominees by denying majority Republicans in the Senate a quorum until Musk and his so-called Department of Government Efficiency are stopped, denied access to confidential data at federal agencies and removed from federal buildings.

Oregon's other Democratic U.S. senator, Jeff Merkley, the ranking member of the Senate budget committee, is joining an all-night protest of Democratic leaders on the Senate floor in an attempt to block a vote on Trump's nominee for the Office of Management and Budget, Russell Vought.

"We're in the middle of an authoritarian administrative coup," Merkley said on X. "This is a moment for every American to stand up, speak up, and get involved."

The protests are part of a nationwide movement on Wednesday orchestrated in part by the pro-democracy group Indivisible and others to show opposition to a firehose of controversial executive orders since the inauguration. They include a threat to freeze certain federal funds, abolish the U.S. Agency for International Development, strip federal government websites of words associated with diversity, equity and inclusion and the LGBTQ+ community and a move against scientific research nationwide. Besides Oregon, thousands turned out from the West to East coasts, with large protests in Washington state, Arizona, Colorado, North Carolina and elsewhere.

And on the streets, protestors waved signs and chanted against Senate approval of Vought to lead the budget office. He has made clear he thinks Trump has the authority to block congressionally approved funding the administration doesn't agree with. Vought is a lead author of the controversial conservative framework Project 2025, meant to reshape the federal government, giving full powers to the executive branch.

Hundreds rally

Some protesters in Salem, who gathered outside the Capitol, traveled from around the state and drove through snow or ice to join the rally. Many said they were there to show Trump and Oregon politicians that the people of Oregon were paying attention and aren't happy.

Dago Benavidez, a Salem-based artist, held a sign saying "not my czar" — a message he said applied to both Trump and Musk. Benavidez used to work for the state employment department, where he used federal funds provided under the North American Free Trade Agreement to help people who lost their jobs as a result of production shifting to Canada or Mexico learn new skills and find new jobs. He was worried by the federal funding freeze Trump announced, then withdrew after it was blocked by courts last week.

"I'm hoping even Trump supporters wake up and see the damage this guy is doing to us," Benavidez said.

Kendra Petersen-Morgan drove from Portland to Salem and carried a sign that said "I'm going to speak out while I still can." Petersen-Morgan said she felt like she needed to come for her two daughters and for friends who were afraid to attend a protest or speak out publicly.

Spending the morning with likeminded people also helped lift her spirits as she has felt overwhelmed by an onslaught of news from D.C.

“People are fed up and aren’t just going to sit and stand by,” she said.

Tom Coppelino, who traveled from Corvallis to Salem, used to take his environmental studies students to protests in Eugene. He considered bringing some of their protest signs with him, but he needed to carry his cane instead.

Coppelino said he regularly hears that Trump thinks people who oppose him are doing something wrong or are in trouble. The action in Salem and capitals around the country on Wednesday should be a sign to Trump that Americans aren’t cowed by Trump, he said.

“Does it look like we’re in trouble?” he asked, gesturing to the crowd of people waving signs to a chorus of honks. “We’re going to fight as much as we can. We’re not going to stop.”

Salem resident Vincent Johnson held an upside-down U.S. flag over his shoulder as a sign that the country is in distress and brandished a sign that said “Tired of partying like it’s 1933,” a reference to the year Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany. Johnson saw clear parallels between modern-day America and the rise of the Nazi government in Germany, and he said he worries that if Americans don’t act now that they’ll lose their democracy.

“I hope they realize that we’re not going to go down without a fight,” Johnson said.

Carol Tomlinson traveled from Longview, Washington, to support a friend and protest against a host of Trump policies, including his stances on immigration, LGBTQ+ rights and Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency, which has not been sanctioned by Congress.

“It seems like he — Trump as well as Elon — are trying to systematically decimate anything that makes us American,” Tomlinson said.

Debbie Duus and Elissa Wilson came to Salem from Newport, driving through snow. Everyone Duus talks to in her coastal community wants to do something, she said, and they feel more energized now than they did before Trump took office, when people were “just depressed” and could only speculate about what he would do.

“Now we have a reason to protest everything he does,” Duus said. “Musk is acting out. Trump is acting out.”

In Portland, Thor Hinckley was among the crowd in front of Wyden’s office calling on the senator and senate Democrats to stop Vought’s confirmation to lead the Office of Budget and Management.

“That’s absolutely the top concern,” he said.

Hinckley is a member of the nonprofit Third Act Oregon, made up of people over 60 who support environmental policies and protecting Democracy.

“They’ve been very good so far,” he said of Wyden and Merkley’s opposition to Vought in previous hearings, “and we want them to do even more, because the crisis is real and it’s time to act now.”

For Cheryl McCoy, 75, getting Musk out of positions of power in the federal government is the priority, she said at the Portland rally.

“The very first thing, as far as I’m concerned, is you’ve got to stop Musk,” McCoy said. “This is a constitutional crisis. He’s unelected. This is an attempt to overthrow everything that matters to us in this country.”

<https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2025/02/05/hundreds-rally-in-salem-portland-against-trump-musk-moves-on-funding-against-agencies/>

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The rallies drew people from across Oregon who are worried about federal funding, Trump’s budget nominee and a slew of other actions in recent days.