

# Elon Musk: Friend to China, Enemy of Democracy

## MUSK & TRUMP

- At the beginning of his administration, President Trump announced that Musk would be part of a new manufacturing team to advise on manufacturing policy. Musk and a handful of other business leaders had breakfast with the new president and Musk delivered an even bigger surprise by declaring his support for former ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson's nomination to become the next Secretary of State. Responding to an endorsement of the former ExxonMobil CEO by Britain's The Economist, Musk wrote, "This may sound surprising coming from me, but I agree (that) Rex Tillerson has the potential to be an excellent Sec of State." Prodded to explain by a reporter, Musk issued a tweet declaring, "Rex is an exceptionally competent executive, understands geopolitics and knows how to win for his team. His team is now the USA." [Source](#)
- President Donald Trump showered Tesla CEO Elon Musk with strange and confusing praise during a CNBC interview at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. "I was worried about him, because he's one of our great geniuses, and we have to protect our genius," Trump said. "You know, we have to protect Thomas Edison, and we have to protect all of these people that came up with originally the lightbulb and the wheel and all of these things." "You go back a year, and they were talking about the end of the company," Trump said. "And now all of a sudden they're talking about these great things." [Source](#)
- President Donald Trump sided with Elon Musk in Musk's fight with local authorities to reopen Tesla's car factory in California. "California should let Tesla & @elonmusk open the plant, NOW," Trump tweeted. "It can be done Fast & Safely!" On Monday, Tesla began operations at the Fremont factory in defiance of Alameda County rules saying it could not resume work. Musk celebrated the return and acknowledged the risks of the move. [Source](#)
- Elon Musk has had some controversial opinions about the coronavirus pandemic. He firmly took a side against the lockdowns imposed in many places in the U.S. "FREE AMERICA NOW," the Tesla CEO tweeted to his 33.3 million Twitter followers. Some of Musk's comments echo the slogans of pro-Trump, anti-lockdown protesters in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, and elsewhere, which demand the states to reopen.
- Trump tweeted, "Great job by @elonmusk in agreeing to build, in TEXAS, what is expected to be the largest auto plant anywhere in the world. He kept his word to me. Texas & @Tesla are big winners. MADE IN THE USA!" Responding to Trump, Tesla CEO Elon Musk wrote, "Thank you on behalf of the Tesla team. We look forward to building Giga Texas!" [Source](#)

- Following the Capitol riots and subsequent censorship of Trump, Elon Musk tweeted “A lot of people are going to be super unhappy with West Coast high tech as the de facto arbiter of free speech.” [Source](#)







## POLITICAL GIVING

Money to PACs	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACEEX	06-05-2018	\$5,000	Majority Cmte PAC (R)
Money to Parties	MUSK, ELON R MR LOS ANGELES, CA 90049	SPACEEX	06-05-2018	\$33,900	National Republican Congressional Cmte (R)
Money to Parties	MUSK, ELON R MR HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACEEX/TESLA MOTORS	03-31-2017	\$33,900	National Republican Congressional Cmte (R)
Money to PACs	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACEEX	03-31-2017	\$5,000	Majority Cmte PAC (R)
Money to Candidates	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACE EXPLORATION TECHNOLOGIES	03-31-2017	\$2,700	McCarthy, Kevin (R)
Money to Parties	MUSK, ELON R MR HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACEEX/TESLA MOTORS	03-31-2017	\$5,700	National Republican Congressional Cmte (R)
Money to Candidates	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACE EXPLORATION TECHNOLOGIES	03-31-2017	\$2,700	McCarthy, Kevin (R)
Money to Parties	MUSK, ELON R MR HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACEEX/TESLA MOTORS	09-29-2014	\$22,400	National Republican Congressional Cmte (R)
Money to Candidates	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACE EXPLORATION TECHN	09-29-2014	\$2,600	McCarthy, Kevin (R)
Money to PACs	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACEEX	09-29-2014	\$5,000	Majority Cmte PAC (R)
Money to	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE,	SPACEEX	08-28-	\$4,800	Reclaim America PAC

PACs	CA 90250		2013		(R)
Money to PACs	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACE X	06-07-2013	\$2,500	Longhorn PAC (R)
Money to Parties	MUSK, ELON R MR HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACE X/TESLA MOTORS	06-04-2013	\$32,400	National Republican Congressional Cmte (R)
Money to Candidates	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACE X	03-08-2013	-\$2,600	Graham, Lindsey (R)
Money to Candidates	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACE X	03-08-2013	\$2,600	Graham, Lindsey (R)
Money to Candidates	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACE X	03-08-2013	\$5,200	Graham, Lindsey (R)
Money to Candidates	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACE EXPLORATION TECHN	10-01-2011	\$2,500	McCarthy, Kevin (R)
Money to Candidates	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACE EXPLORATION TECHN	10-01-2011	\$2,500	McCarthy, Kevin (R)
Money to PACs	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACE X	08-24-2011	\$1,000	Future Leaders PAC (R)
Money to PACs	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACE X	02-15-2011	\$5,000	Majority Cmte PAC (R)
Money to Candidates	MUSK, ELON R MR EL SEGUNDO, CA 90245	SPACE X	10-13-2010	\$1,000	Calvert, Ken (R)
Money to PACs	MUSK, ELON HAWTHORNE, CA 90250	SPACE X	06-08-2010	\$1,000	Future Leaders PAC (R)
Money to Parties	MUSK, ELON R MR HAWTHORNE,	SPACE X	03-28-2009	\$10,000	National Republican Congressional Cmte (R)

	CA 90250				
Money to Parties	MUSK, ELON R MR LOS ANGELES, CA 90077	SPACE X	03-17-2008	\$28,500	National Republican Congressional Cmte (R)
Money to Candidates	MUSK, ELON R MR EL SEGUNDO, CA 90245	SPACE X	10-11-2007	\$2,000	Calvert, Ken (R)
Money to Parties	MUSK, ELON R MR LOS ANGELES, CA 90077	SPACE X	02-27-2007	\$25,000	National Republican Congressional Cmte (R)
Money to PACs	MUSK, ELON EL SEGUNDO, CA 90245	SPACE X/CHAIRMAN	09-26-2006	\$5,000	Eureka PAC (R)
Money to Parties	MUSK, ELON R MR LOS ANGELES, CA 90077	SPACE EXPLORATION TECHNOLOGIES	03-24-2006	\$25,000	National Republican Congressional Cmte (R)
Money to Parties	MUSK, ELON R MR LOS ANGELES, CA 90077	SPACE EXPLORATION TECHNOLOGIES	05-19-2005	\$25,000	National Republican Congressional Cmte (R)
Money to Candidates	MUSK, ELON R MR EL SEGUNDO, CA 90245	SPACE X	03-28-2005	\$2,000	Calvert, Ken (R)
Money to PACs	MUSK, ELON LOS ANGELES, CA 90077	SPACE X	06-30-2004	\$500	Senate Victory Fund (R)
Money to Parties	MUSK, ELON R MR LOS ANGELES, CA 90077	SPACE EXPLORATION TECHNOLOGIES	04-07-2004	\$5,000	National Republican Congressional Cmte (R)

## MISINFORMATION & ANTI-GOVERNMENT RHETORIC

- The tech billionaire has gained new admirers — thanks to his public spats with California lawmakers over his desire to reopen his factories in spite of government orders, his desire to keep the lights on and, crucially, his growing disdain for media outlets such as CNN. His cryptic tweet

about taking “the red pill” — a reference to The Matrix and an internet term that, broadly speaking these days, means that one is questioning the nature of political reality — was seconded by none other than Ivanka Trump, who tweeted in response: “Taken!” [Source](#)

- From the beginning of the crisis, Musk, the temperamental billionaire leader of SpaceX and Tesla, has frequently questioned mainstream scientific research, reporting and policy on Covid-19, to the point that Twitter was forced to deal with a wave of complaints suggesting the social-media platform remove his tweets for spreading disinformation. He accelerated the proposal of hydroxychloroquine as a potential cure from the backwaters of Bitcoin twitter discussions into the mainstream, off of two tweets (“maybe worth considering...”), bucked government lockdowns in order to keep his electric cars in production and recently stated that he believed policies designed to keep Americans safe were violating their constitutional rights. As he bluntly tweeted in March: “The coronavirus panic is dumb.” [Source](#)
- Elon Musk, whose Tesla Inc. was a major beneficiary of government stimulus in the wake of the last global financial crisis, has soured on the concept. The outspoken chief executive officer of both Tesla and U.S. government contractor SpaceX tweeted Friday that “another government stimulus package is not in the best interests of the people,” in his opinion. [Source](#)
- The rivalry between Tesla and Facebook has been going on for several years now. It seems to have all started back in 2016 when a SpaceX blast (Musk's rocket company) took out of a Facebook satellite. Zuckerberg said that he was "deeply disappointed" about the explosion. Musk responded to reporter Kerry Flynn about the launch in a tweet stating, "Yeah, my fault for being an idiot. We did give them a free launch to make up for it, and I think they had some insurance." Then, after the Capitol building riots that kicked off 2021, Musk tweeted "This is called the domino effect" and attached to the tweet was a picture of dominoes, with the first domino labeled "a website to rate women on campus." The final domino was a reference to the Capitol Building rioters. *(Important to note that WeChat is installed in Tesla vehicles and both SpaceX and Tesla utilize Chinese data sharing platforms.)* [Source](#)

## WORKERS' RIGHTS

- A Chinese media outlet recently conducted its own investigation into the matter and outright accused the automaker of sacrificing build quality for high production volume in order to satisfy demand. This report, according to Teslarati, included interviews with suppliers who stated Tesla accepted faulty parts for volume's sake. One supplier outright admitted their company "simply can't make enough parts that meet the quality standard. It's stressful." Not surprisingly, this individual wished to remain anonymous. The Chinese report also said Giga Shanghai is operating like a "sweatshop" where workers must work long hours. And now Tesla VP of China, Grace Tao, has responded to these accusations, though her response likely won't satisfy everyone. "In strict accordance with Chinese laws and regulations, there is no phenomenon of 'lowering quality for production.'" Tao also implied the report was not accurate to begin with. "Obviously, it has not been carefully considered and does not conform to the facts." Although Tesla hasn't provided



concrete evidence to contradict the report's claims, it's possible it will sue the publication because it was "flawed in details, and the article was immediately revised within an hour after... [it] was issued." [Source](#)

- In a lawsuit filed Tuesday in Washoe County District Court, an electrical contractor alleges he was fired for reporting theft at the factory that produces batteries and drive trains for Tesla vehicles. The contractor, Lynn Thompson, also says Tesla violated terms of a contract with the state of Nevada, which provided taxpayer-subsidized incentives worth \$1.3 billion to convince the company to build the factory in Nevada. [Source](#)
- Tesla factory employees spent almost three times as many days off the job because of work-related injuries and illness in 2018 as the year before. [Source](#)
- Interviews, internal communications and sworn legal statements filed by more than two dozen current or former Tesla employees and contractors describe a wide range of concerns among some African-American workers at the factory in Fremont, including threats by co-workers, demeaning assignments and barriers to advancement. Three lawsuits by former workers accusing Tesla of failing to curb racial discrimination and harassment have been filed since early last year. [Source](#)
- Tesla is the only nonunion US-owned automotive plant in the country. Between 2012 and early 2017, 180 Tesla employees applied for compensation for partially or permanently disabling injuries, according to a database obtained via a public records request by BuzzFeed News from the California Department of Industrial Relations (DIR). Tesla consistently failed to follow its own environmental health and safety guidelines, which state that workers should rotate tasks several times a day — a manufacturing industry standard practice because it can help prevent ergonomic injuries. The company is currently developing an automated system for rotating workers, set to roll out mid-2018, and members of its safety committee currently started auditing rotation schedules twice a week in mid-2017 (unconfirmed whether this was achieved). [Source](#)
- In February 2017, Tesla factory worker Jose Moran published an op-ed lambasting his employer over issues like safety, hours, and pay, and asking his coworkers to consider joining the United Auto Workers. Those involved in the unionization campaign say Tesla has fought the union at every step, and in August, the National Labor Relations Board filed a complaint against Tesla, meaning it found reason to continue investigating claims that the company “has been interfering with, restraining and coercing employees in the exercise of their rights.” Some of those who support the union drive were among the hundreds of factory workers Tesla fired without warning this fall, citing performance issues. [Source](#)
- Tesla workers rallied outside Alameda County Public Health Department on Thursday. They want the county to protect workers at the company's Fremont plant during the COVID-19 pandemic. Workers said some who are vulnerable or who have vulnerable family members have been fired because they are concerned about returning to work. They also said there are not enough Cal/OSHA inspectors to follow up on complaints about unsafe working conditions. Worker Carlos Gabriel said officials should be holding Tesla accountable. He is among the

organizers of Thursday's rally. "There are people we are paying to keep us safe, and they're just turning the other cheek," Gabriel said. In the past Tesla has said it encourages employees to stay home if they are sick and has taken steps to guard against the coronavirus at its factory. However, last week Washington Post reported two Tesla employees were fired after being allowed to stay home for fear of contracting COVID-19. [Source](#)

- Tesla filed suit Saturday night against Alameda County, California, after local officials there refused to let the company reopen its Fremont factory. In a series of tweets earlier Saturday, Tesla CEO Elon Musk also threatened to move the company's headquarters to Texas or Nevada, where shelter-in-place rules are less restrictive. "Frankly, this is the final straw. Tesla will now move its HQ and future programs to Texas/Nevada immediately," Musk tweeted. Tesla did not respond to a request for comment on Saturday. The automaker had planned to allow a fraction of its factory workers to return to work by Friday, but was warned by the Alameda County Health Department in a livestreamed town hall on Friday that such a move would be violating the county's rules. "This has been a collaborative, good faith effort to develop and implement a safety plan that allows for reopening while protecting the health and well-being of the thousands of employees who travel to and from work at Tesla's factory," the Alameda Health Department responded on Saturday in a statement to CNN Business. "The team at Tesla has been responsive to our guidance and recommendations, and we look forward to coming to an agreement on an appropriate safety plan very soon." [Source](#)
- Employees at SpaceX, a spacecraft manufacturer owned by Elon Musk, were allegedly denied meal breaks, rest periods, overtime compensation, and pay for unused vacation, according to a suit filed in a California state court. Current and former employees were refused certain rights guaranteed to them by the California Labor Code, the complaint said. The employees also weren't allowed to leave the premises for lunch without permission and SpaceX allegedly failed to provide accurate itemized wage statements, the lawsuit said. Company security procedure allegedly caused employees to work overtime, for which they weren't compensated, because security points required them to spend additional travel time between entering the premises and clocking in. Nalani Choy, a propulsion technician at the company headquarters in southern California, filed an administrative complaint against SpaceX in February with the California Workplace Development Agency, stating her intent to pursue penalties against the company. Two other employees named in the suit also filed complaints, but none received a response regarding an investigation, according to the suit. [Source](#)

## CHINA

- The Tesla CEO was asked China's "ethical limitations" in an interview with Business Insider. During the interview, Mr Musk also discussed artificial intelligence and the race between China and the US to develop the futuristic technology. Mr Musk said he had a positive experience when talking to Chinese government officials during his visits to the country, and said they could "possibly" be "more responsible" to their people's happiness than the US. He added: "When I meet with Chinese government officials, they're always very concerned about this. Are people going to be happy about a thing? Is this going to actually serve the benefit of the people? "It seems ironic, but even though you have sort of a single-party system, they really actually seem to care a lot about the well-being of the people. "In fact, they're maybe even more sensitive to public opinion than what I see in the US." [Source](#)

- Musk tweeted: “China understands the profound importance of reusability. The era of expendable rockets will soon be over.” [Source](#)
- In 2017, Tesla CEO Elon Musk said that he is “glad to have Tencent as an investor and advisor to Tesla.” Chinese social media platforms are under a legal duty to give the country's communist government full access to the content of private messages. December 2019, Video-sharing app TikTok hit with a class action lawsuit in the US that claims it transferred "vast quantities" of user data to China. [Source1](#) [Source 2](#)
- Musk replied: “China rocks in my opinion. The energy in China is great. People there – there’s like a lot of smart, hard working people. And they’re really -- they’re not entitled, they’re not complacent, whereas I see in the United States increasingly much more complacency and entitlement especially in places like the Bay Area, and L.A. and New York.” [Source](#)
- Speaking at a conference in Shanghai with Alibaba (BABA) chairman Jack Ma on Thursday, Musk said he was in town to visit the factory and was impressed by the progress he'd seen so far. Tesla's China team has done a "mind-blowing" job, Musk said. "I've never seen anything built so fast in my life before, to be totally frank. And I've seen some crazy things ... I really think China is the future." [Source](#)
- “I love China and want to come here more often,” Musk was quoted as saying in a report on Gov.cn. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said he hopes American carmaker Tesla can help drive the country’s continued opening up, and even offered its controversial chief executive Elon Musk Chinese permanent residency, according to the government’s website. [Source](#)
- “The China space industry is very impressive,” Musk told his 29.4 million Twitter followers. [Source](#)

